

THE VANISHING FLEETS

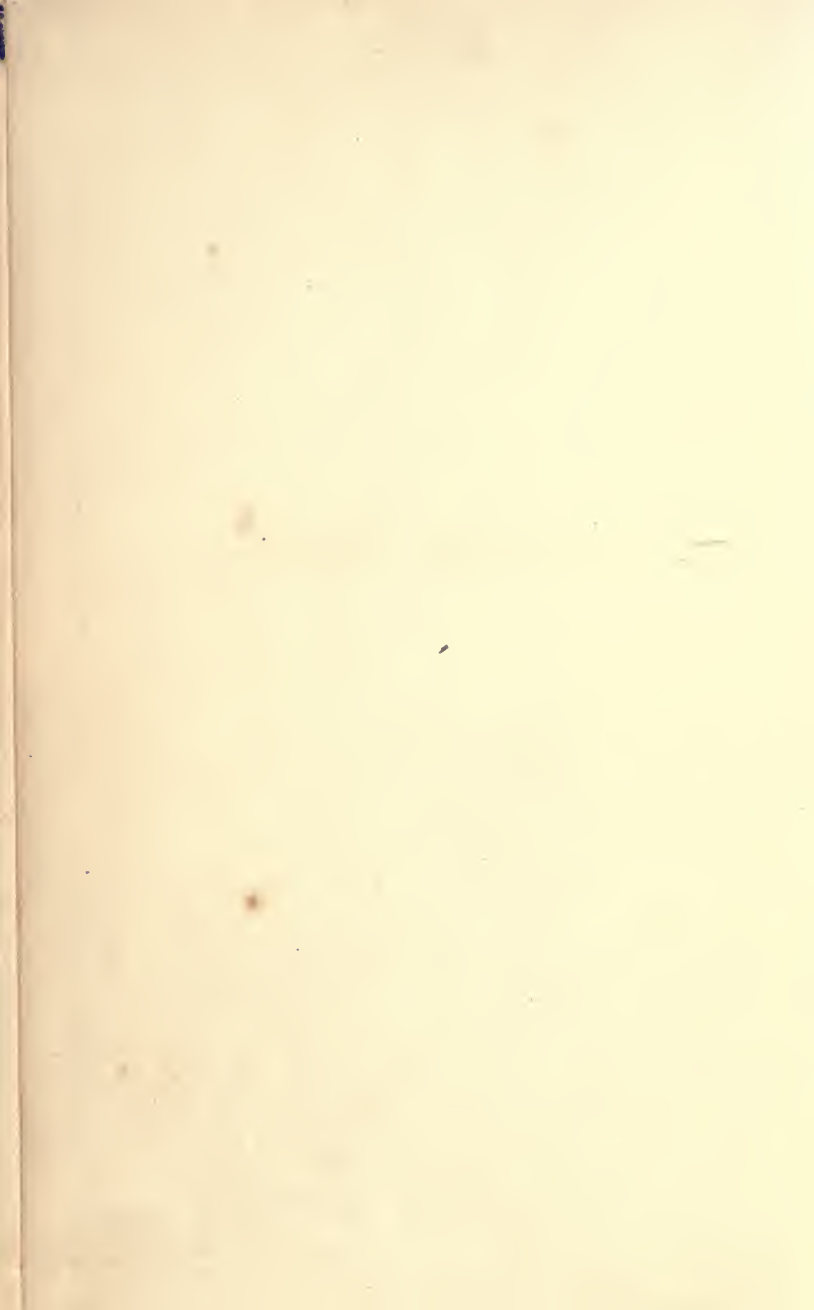
ROY NORTON



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The VANISHING FLEETS





“The General . . . shook a clenched fist under the Admiral’s very nose.”

The VANISHING FLEETS

By Roy Norton



ILLUSTRATED

**New York
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1908**

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THE ASSOCIATED SUNDAY MAGAZINES

Published January, 1908

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TO
MY MOTHER

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NOTE

THIS book makes no attempt to convey a lesson. It does, however, try to give a note of warning. National patriotism, national wealth, and national resources would all prove unavailing if the United States were suddenly confronted by a determined enemy with a preponderance of guns manned by veterans. The writer frankly admits he has no sympathy with those "watchdogs of the treasury" who decry naval expenditures and the persistent increase of the navy. He does not believe the navy adequate for the protection of the nation, nor does he think the army sufficient. He believes Governmental economies along other lines would enable the nation to bring its defense up to an invincible point without working any material hardship on the gentlemen of the trusts who loudly claim to pay nearly all the taxes.

Some argument has taken place in the press regarding the possibility of such a discovery as is brought out in the "radioplanes." For the benefit of the reader the author wishes to say that its scientific possibilities are endorsed by some of the

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best known inventors in the world, and notably by one of the greatest, no less a personage than Hudson Maxim, the most eminent authority living on high explosives and the most daring investigator of kindred sciences. And to him the author wishes to hereby make acknowledgment, not only for his scientific suggestions but for kindly encouragement, friendly advice and unremitting patience. To him is due credit for much of that which is worth reading in this book.

ROY NORTON.

CHICAGO, November, 1907.

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PART ONE

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CHAPTER I

A SLEEPING NATION



PATHETIC and unprepared, the country stood on the verge of war. The wheels of many closing factories had droned a final protest, idleness was spreading, and throughout the land the subject of the impending conflict was gravely discussed. Distinguished orators in great cities predicted dire losses in prestige and honor, and every hamlet had its prophet of woe. The nation's position as a first class Power, even its very integrity, seemed at stake.

And in all this ominous unrest, this clamor for action, the administration at Washington sat unmoved, smiling what seemed to the country and the world at large a fatuous smile of complacency. It was then endeavoring, as in previous crises, through the use of high sounding words, to avert an actual clash at arms. Not many of these messages of diplomacy were made public, but such as did reach those who read sounded hollow as tinkling brass and did nothing either to define the attitude of the United States or to

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clear away the points at issue. They were of the month of May, and seemed of May madness.

For some years there had been mooted questions between Japan and the great American Republic, due in the first instance to troubles of a purely racial character. The Pacific coast, which for many decades had been compelled by its geographical situation to face an economic invasion from the Orient, wanted none of the small men from across the water. It referred caustically to past experiences with Chinese, and emphatically rebelled against the more aggressive but no less objectionable Japanese. It had been overruled by the people at large, until the whole country, awakening from its lethargic state, became educated in questions of immigration, to learn too late that the Californians had just cause for grievance.

Other complications followed. Japan by example and precept rejuvenated the sleeping giant which spoke her sister tongue and had with her an offensive and defensive alliance that could be invoked in time of need, and by further adroit policy maintained a similar compact with Great Britain. She waxed prosperous, demanding trade concessions where once she had begged them. Nor had she neglected the perfecting of her navy, which from the time of her war with Russia had been one of the most capable. Now it equaled

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in size and probably excelled in fighting efficiency that of the United States.

In the Philippines the racial war came to such an acute stage that Japan demanded immediate adjustment, although following the same diplomatic methods which characterized her career as an advanced nation,—pitifully pleading to the world at large that she was a small Power whose only wish was for peace; invoking sympathy on the one hand, and preparing to strike before hostilities were anticipated on the other.

Some of the ancients of newspaperdom recalled that she had adopted these tactics with Russia, lulling the lethargic bear into a condition of hebetudal security, and then without warning swooping down and delivering the first and most effective blow. That history was to repeat itself was asserted so frequently that even the most conservative journals partisan to the core and avowedly for the administration, began to hint in mild terms that it was a time for action. The country looked to Washington; and Washington merely smiled and gave out interviews that “in the opinion of the administration there will be no war.”

And in the midst of all this turmoil of mind and passiveness of accomplishment, Guy Hillier, secretary of the British Embassy in Washington, found other and more personal annoyances. The particular vexation was a woman's perversity.

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He brooded over his love affair more than the welfare of nations, as he stood in the great railway station of the Capital on this night, watching for the arrival of the Florida special which was to bring to him Norma Roberts, after an absence of nearly a month. His hands were thrust into his pockets, his hat was drawn to an aggressive angle over his eyes, and his whole attitude was one of obstinacy. The arc lights above showed a mass of those waiting, as he waited, for the arrival of friends and relatives, while here and there trucks laden with highly piled baggage were pulled or pushed by depot attendants, who seemed insistently to demand that he seek other places of standing, or, when he was slow in obeying, shoved their cargoes against his legs.

With some bitterness he recalled that it was not the first time within six months that he had loitered in this station. To him it seemed that since he first had known the girl he always had been waiting and longing. She had held him in thrall since the night he met her more than a year before, when half reluctantly he had accepted an invitation to a reception given to her father; and yet in all that aftertime he had been in perpetual suspense. The reception had been much like other receptions, and was given in honor of another invention by "Old Bill Roberts," as he styled himself and was known to his intimates.

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Guy had gone through mere curiosity, wishing to see at short range a man who only a few years before had been dubbed a "harebrained crank," but whose work had proved him otherwise. He remembered the lights of the drawing room, the throng of guests, and that Roberts had forgotten the event and kept some of the most distinguished men of the nation, including nearly every member of the Cabinet, waiting till he could be dragged from his laboratory at the end of the garden.

Everyone had taken the remissness with American good humor, laughed and chatted till a search could be made, and then given way to the inventor's entrance, which was not triumphal. It was effected with something approaching a lack of proprieties. There had been the sound of a high strung, snarling voice in protest from the lower end of the drawing room, which was luxuriously furnished and presided over by Norma. There had been a moment's silence, then an exclamation loud enough to be heard by those who were curiously expectant.

"Well, I couldn't help it," the petulant words came. "I got tired of waiting around, and went back to work. You got me into this mess. You know I don't like dress affairs, and hate dress suits. Working clothes suit me best. So there!"

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Everyone had looked at one another understandingly and smiled when the eminent scientist and inventor had been led into the room. Guy, craning his neck in a sudden desire to see this entry, had a confused picture of a man with a shock of white hair and long eyebrows, from beneath which glared eyes of great restlessness, and also remembered that the dress suit which had caused so much worry was stained with freshly spilled chemicals, and that even as he came the inventor was furtively wiping a pair of grimy hands on his handkerchief. But it was not the man nor the suppressed titters of laughter that he recollected best; it was the girl who escorted him.

She came leading her father by the arm, the daintiness of her costume enhanced by the marks of the workshop on his coat. She walked smilingly forward, completely self possessed, with head thrown back, and making no apologies. Had it not been for the conversation at the door, overheard within the room, none would have supposed that she wished a more ceremonious appearance. She challenged with her eyes as she passed her guests, and to Hillier's surprise, bound in conventionality as he always had been, it suddenly seemed that in all of it there was nothing inappropriate nor incongruous.

Then came that later hour when he was intro-

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duced to the savant, and the latter had looked him squarely in the eyes and given him a handshake that was surprisingly strong. And the girl! At the first word spoken by her his heart gave a great leap, insistently demanding that he should know her better. It had been easy to yield to its call, and he made occasion to be as near her side throughout the evening as was possible. He found himself not far from her when refreshments were served, and close to her father, who, refurbished, protested at the praise given him. He watched her face when the inventor responded to a toast and ended by saying, "While it's true I have made some discoveries, the world at large fails to appreciate or won't believe that the perfection of all I have done has been achieved by my assistant, my daughter Norma."

The speaker would have gone further had she not interrupted with a laughing denial; and yet Guy's longer acquaintance led him to regard the scientist's statement as a truth. He was to learn later that she always was with her father, nearly always inaccessible, and sometimes wrapped in such thought that he could scarcely probe her mind. The evening of their meeting had ended as do all evenings; but thenceforth he had sought her. Their acquaintance grew to a more friendly basis, and went steadily forward until on his part at least it culminated in love. Sometimes he had

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the courage to believe it returned. At other times he grew despondent in his assault on the portals of her heart, and feared that no human affection could drag her away from those crucibles and retorts with which she wrought through the days and nights in silent companionship with her queer old sire; but now that war and separation threatened, he was resolved to bring his siege to the issue and gain an answer.

A long drawn whistle of increasing volume vibrated through the dusk; one headlight stared more steadily than the others which gleamed across the network of steel rails beyond and came swiftly, picking a trail to the great arched shed. With a final clanging of its bell, the big locomotive perspired past him, the whistling brakes gave a harsh grind, and the train came to a halt, while the injectors of the engine throbbed and chugged like those of a racer almost spent but coming to a strong finish.

Guy hurried back with quick impatient steps to the Pullman, where negroes dropped carpeted steps, in time to see the one for whom he waited emerge, calm and immaculate as usual, but with such a gladness of welcome in her eyes that he could barely resist taking her into his arms. Time might drag, but it always found her unchanged. In sudden awkwardness he took her lighter luggage and wrap and walked with her to

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the exit of the noisy station, finding all his carefully formulated sentences forgotten, and listening to her rather than saying anything himself.

Almost the first question she asked him was of the war; and at this he felt a tinge of disappointment. It was too impersonal a topic for a man who had waited a month for an opportunity to speak of affection. He would rather she gave first thought to what he had been doing, what he was going to do, and what he wished to do. Even when they reached a more quiet place away from the din of railway traffic and aside from the rush of outgoing passengers, she turned toward him with a grave face and asked for "the real latest news."

"Do tell me," she said, "not what people say, or what the officials send out, but the real inside situation. Is there going to be any war?"

"I am afraid so," he answered gloomily. "The Government is still insisting that there is not much danger of a clash, and backs up its manifestoes by making no preparation whatever. There has been no attempt to mobilize a fleet in the Pacific, nor to assemble other vessels from foreign ports; but our own advices are that war is inevitable and may come at any moment."

She did not respond, but seemed almost to have forgotten him in her reverie and contemplation of his words. Nor did she express surprise and

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interest when he gave her a seat in the brougham which waited for them beside the station gates. Not till she heard him order the driver to take them to a fashionable café did she return from the land of abstraction and become vivacious again.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked. "Did I understand it that we are going to an old friend? I'm half starved, and am going to drop all this war subject for a while."

When he told her their destination she clapped her hands, and showed her approval by saying, "That's good. Do you remember the little balcony overhanging the street where green things grow and we used to sit last summer when we wanted to be alone and talk? May we have the balcony table?" His smiling assurance that he remembered and that it was to that very spot he was conducting her brought forth her applause at his selection. She leaned out to look ahead as they approached it, looked contented when they alighted before it, and eagerly stepped within when the attendant swung open the doors.

They walked across the carpeted floors and between tables where others were dining, and everywhere as they went she was recalled to the sterner things of life by a conversation which had no other topic than war. Here and there she recognized men occupying more or less responsible positions in the Government, and a few whose

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uniforms proclaimed them to be officers of the army and navy. These latter seemed discussing the situation from a more confidential viewpoint, and held their heads close together now and then as if fearful that others might overhear their whispered comments.

"All criticising the Government," Guy muttered, indicating one group with a slight nod of his head. "They can't understand it any more than we can."

She looked at him sharply as if about to speak, and then after an instant's hesitation closed her half parted lips and advanced to the seat she desired. A white clad waiter served them and deferentially brought a newspaper still wet from the press.

"Thought you'd like to see the latest extra, sir," he explained as he left them; and Hillier with a look of weariness glanced at the headlines and laid it aside.

"Same old thing," he commented in reply to her look of inquiry. "'The Gazette' has just learned that not even coaling orders have been issued, and this from no less a person than the Secretary of the Navy, who has been goaded into free speech by the constant pricks of criticism. I wonder if these people are insane?"

"Guy," she retorted, "I don't think it altogether fair to speak of the men at the head of the

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Government as insane until they have been proved in error. Let's talk of something else."

And he, worried and tired of the topic, was glad to lead into more personal subjects. He thought of the old inventor whom he had not seen for months.

"How is your father now?" he asked. "Is he improving in health, and where is he?"

For the first time she showed some embarrassment. He watched her, and as she hesitated before answering began to wonder if there was not something concerning Roberts which she was endeavoring to conceal from him. "Oh, he is well, but very overworked and tired," she replied finally.

"But you haven't answered all my question," he insisted. "You haven't told me where he is."

She remained silent, toying with one of the rings upon her hand and looking out through the vines to where the lights of the city gleamed below and stretched out into the blackness beyond.

"Norm," he said, leaning toward her, "is there anything wrong with him? All your letters come from Miami. There's a sanatorium there. It can't be that your father is—"

"No—no—no; it isn't that!" she replied, but with a look of such apprehension that he almost doubted her for the first time in all their friend-

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ship. "Father is all right, only he has worked very hard, and— Oh, please don't insist on my telling you any more! Believe me, I should be frank with you, of all persons in the world, if I could; but I can't be—quite."

Impulsively he stretched his hands across the table and seized hers. The hum of conversation had died out in the room back of them, most of the diners having departed. It had grown so quiet that they could hear the strains of a band from one of the parks, playing as gayly as if war was an unknown contingency.

"Norm," he said pleadingly, "take me into your full confidence! Tell me what it is that troubles you! Something does, I'm sure. I have read it in your letters, and in your eyes when you come to me. Let me share it with you! You know I love you, and a part of love is to share each other's troubles."

He tried to hold her hands; but she withdrew them tremblingly. She turned her face away toward the lights of the night, without looking at him. For what seemed a long time he waited. "Oh, I wish you had not said that to me—just yet," she answered at length. "You make it very hard for both of us now. I want to be honest with you, want to give you my confidence and my—but I can't. I can't tell you anything. You must wait."

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"Listen," he commanded, again leaning toward her. "There is something which makes me think you love me. I shall ask nothing more of your father, or of your plans, because I want to make you see the position." He frowned at the waiter, who came toward them and then retreated. "Norm," he went on, "there is to be war. Your country is unprepared. It will be overrun by an enemy that is ruthless and that will come to conquer. The end may not be defeat; but as certain as death this country will writhe and suffer before it can regain the ground it will lose in the outset. Can't you see that? Can't you understand what it will be for you and your father here under such conditions? Don't you know that for your very safety you must leave? As my wife, or even my betrothed, I can make the way so much easier for you! Give me the right, dear, give me the right!"

"It is impossible," she replied, turning toward him again; and he looked hurt. "It is the very danger of war that makes it so. You don't know how much I wish I could say yes to you; but it's impossible. I must be with my father. I owe it to him. He can't go away, nor can I leave him. So until the way is clear we can be friends only, and no more."

He sat stunned for a moment, vainly striving to understand a circumstance or combination of

conditions which could have dictated such an answer. Then the thought came that perhaps the girl before him was making a sacrifice to some awful menace, and it could be only one thing,—the threatened insanity of her father. But what had the war to do with that? Perhaps she would never be more to him if her father went insane, because then she would say no because of her very love for him, and the fear for posterity. Their happiness, then, was to depend upon the condition of an old man's mind.

“Norm,” he asked softly, “is it insanity?”

She turned toward him in amazement, not fathoming his line of reasoning. “I can tell you nothing more.” She spoke as one under stress and suppression. “You must ask nothing more. You must take my love on faith or not at all until you know it is time for you to tell me again that I am necessary to you.”

He felt that it was a crisis with them, and slowly thought of what he might say to break away this barrier or induce her to remove the embargo. They sat looking into the distance; but before he could formulate an argument the sound of a horse's hoofs madly clattering over the pavements caught their attention. It came nearer and nearer, and then past them on the street below a man in soldier's uniform flashed by. They looked at each other wonderingly, half starting

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to their feet, and as they looked a sudden pandemonium broke forth.

From an alleyway nearby burst an army of newsboys, the streets suddenly became alive with pedestrians belched forth from cafés and hotels, and above all other sounds came the cries of, "Extry! Extry! War broken out! War! War! War!"

She turned away from him as if in those cries were an irrevocable sentence of misery, parted the vines, and stood silently looking out into the night; and he knew without seeing that in her eyes were tears.

CHAPTER II

THE SWORD OF THE SAMURAI



THE nation was in a turmoil. Throughout the night and the following day the newspapers of the country sent forth a more or less trustworthy recountal of the opening of hostilities. It had been known for weeks that the transports of Japan guarded by her entire navy had assembled off Nagasaki. It had even been reported that they had sailed away for southern waters; but this had met with later denial. The blow had fallen as swiftly as would that of a rattlesnake which for weeks had been coiled and sinuously moving its head in preparation for attack.

Strangely enough the first reports of war came from foreign sources; but they were undoubtedly official, having been imparted by Japan to her ally, Great Britain. The bulletins issued by the London papers bore the undoubted ring of semi-official utterances. That of "The Daily Mail," cabled in full to the American press, read:

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“Japan, reluctantly abandoning hope of peace by ordinary methods, has been driven to the extreme recourse and has officially declared war against the United States of America.”

Within half an hour after the issuance of this bulletin a second announcement was made, which took no cognizance of the fact that the official declaration must have been preceded by decisive action:

“The Japanese War Office has been advised that on the 27th instant at noon the Philippine Islands were compelled to surrender to the Japanese fleet, which appeared off Manila. Not only did the city itself capitulate, but possession of the entire islands has been given over. The Japanese Government announces with due modesty that it has gained a complete and unqualified victory without the loss of a man.

“LATER.—It is announced by the Japanese Government that the parole of all officers and men of the United States army in the Philippines has been accepted, and the men of the vanquished army have been allowed to sail for San Francisco on board foreign ships, which were lying in the harbor at the time of surrender.”

From every quarter of the land came insistent demands for official news from the Government, coupled with requests for detailed accounts of the defeat. The administration replied with the

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brief statement that no verified report of the action in the Philippines could be given out at that time. It did state, however, that the official declaration of war had been duly received, that the Japanese Ambassador had been withdrawn, the Legation closed, and that the officials would leave New York for their own country that evening, sailing by way of Liverpool.

Public clamor gave way to popular indignation. The country was aflame with war spirit. Guardsmen gathered in their armories, awaiting official bulletins and the expected call to arms; and yet no orders came. The Governors of several States telegraphed to the War Department for advice; but their only satisfaction was in the following message sent broadcast by the Secretary of State:

“The Government, recognizing the patriotism and readiness of the National Guard of the United States, does not at this immediate moment desire its services. It is well to bear in mind, however, that a sudden call may be issued at a later date and to be prepared for emergencies. It wishes to announce further that in its judgment there will be no necessity for fighting on land, and that the situation is completely under control. So far there have been no casualties reported from the Philippines.”

Whatever may have been the state of the pub-

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lic mind before the issuance of this declaration, the country now gasped with amazement. Some of the more violent and outspoken journals demanded of the men at Washington a statement of what they purposed to do in this emergency, and the most radical intimated in no uncertain terms that incompetent administrations were subject to impeachment. But to all of this outburst the Government officials most directly interested presented only the same calm, placid, and indifferent front. There was nothing to be detected in their demeanor to indicate that any action whatever had been taken.

The various members of the diplomatic corps, even to the highest of the foreign Ambassadors, gathered no new information. They were invariably told, first, that the United States knew there had been a declaration of war; second, that the United States knew that the Philippines had been surrendered; third, that no orders had been issued up to that hour for the sailing of any fleet, but that it was expected orders would be given before the day was over. The men of the foreign representation one and all felt a gentle rebuff tantamount to being told that the United States was attending strictly to its own business and desired neither to be advised nor to be compelled to answer questions.

None felt this more keenly than the members

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of the British Legation, and Guy Hillier in particular. His meeting of the night before with Miss Roberts had not terminated satisfactorily, but had come to an abrupt close when he bade her good night at the door of her home, and with all his questions unanswered. Since that moment there had been little time for him either to brood over the situation or to conjecture over her strange attitude.

Throughout the early morning he hurried this way and that, receiving visitors and answering requests for information from Great Britain. His superior, heated and exasperated, broke in upon him almost as he was starting to call up Miss Roberts's residence.

"Guy," the Ambassador said, "we are in a country of lunatics. There is something in this Government's attitude that is inexplicable. It can't be that they are all cowards, and yet I have something to show you."

The Ambassador drew a handkerchief from his sleeve and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, after which he reached a large pudgy finger over to the secretary's desk, pressing thereon a pearl topped electric button.

"Walters," he said to the usher who came into the room in answer to the summons, "neither Mr. Hillier nor myself is here, and we won't be back for an hour; that is what you are to say without

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exception." Then as the attendant bowed himself out he beckoned the secretary to follow him into the seclusion of his private office.

"Hillier," he began, throwing a paper on the desk before the secretary, who had seated himself on the opposite side, "read that."

The secretary saw before him a code telegram neatly interpreted between the lines. It was evidently an official order addressed to a fleet commander at Callao, Peru.

"What do you make of that," he asked in a tone of great disgust, and then, as Hillier started to question him, put up his hand for silence. "No, it doesn't matter where I got it, or how I had it decoded; it is genuine, all right."

The secretary stared at him with a look of blank interrogation on his face, while the Ambassador rose from the seat into which he had thrown himself only a moment before, leaned over his desk, resting himself on the knuckles of his clenched hands, and said:

"That is an order from the Secretary of the Navy positively commanding all the vessels owned by the United States in Pacific waters to return without delay to Baltimore. It's a shame, that's what it is! The other nations of the world should intervene and prevent this country from committing suicide. Conditions are so extraordinary that I don't dare intrust anyone but you to make a

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report of the situation, and you have got to do that in person."

He walked up and down the room excitedly for a few moments, freely expressing his perplexity over the turn of events, and ended by abruptly ringing for a timetable and a sailing list, which he consulted before again addressing himself to his secretary.

"Get out of here as quickly as you can!" he ordered. "Go to your rooms, throw what stuff you need into a bag, and take the first train you can get for New York! I shall meet you at the station here and give you such reports of conditions as I can write in the meantime. When you get to New York, go as quickly as you can to the Cunard dock, from which the *Lucania* is due to sail early in the morning. I shall hold her up until you arrive. Deliver my letters in person to the Foreign Secretary's office in London, and answer such questions as you can regarding this remarkable situation and this incomprehensible Government. These matters are too important to admit of delay and ordinary official reports. Go quickly!" he concluded, almost shoving Hillier through the door. "I'll attend to everything here. Don't let there be any delay on your part!"

The secretary hurried away to make preparations for his departure, leaving the perturbed Ambassador to prepare his reports. He called a

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cab and drove to his apartment, intent on first telephoning to Miss Roberts. His man met him at the door and handed him a letter addressed in a familiar hand, which he hastily tore open and read as he stood in the open doorway:

“DEAR GUY: I have been called away very suddenly, and am going to my father. He needs me now more than ever. I cannot alter anything which I told you last night, nor can I add anything, save to say that sometime, somehow, God willing, we shall be together again, under circumstances where I can tell you all the truth. It will do no good to write to the old address; for I shall not be there. There will be no means of our communicating, I fear, for an indefinite time. It is always within the realms of possibility, when war is on a land, that friends may never meet again. If such should be our case, I pray that you will remember this even up to the last,—I loved you. Good by.

NORMA.”

Stunned by this unexpected missive, he hurried to the telephone, and in a fever of haste and anxiety called up her home, only to be told that she had departed in the earlier hours of the morning after receiving a message presumably from her father. He could learn nothing further of her, and was stopped as if by an insurmountable wall. He

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cursed the fate which separated them and the order which sent him away without giving time to see her, and almost in open rebellion thought for a moment of refusing to act as King's courier, resolving rather to resign from his position and abandon his post; but he was bound by the training of years and the demands of duty, and at the last moment boarded the train which was to take him from the country and the woman he loved.

And even as he went the object of his solicitude was speeding away into the South on a special train.

The train consisted of only two Pullmans and a dining car. Before it in its southern flight the way seemed always open, and hour after hour it rushed onward, drawn by the most powerful locomotives that could be obtained. Norma was the only woman passenger aboard; all the others were grim faced, sun tanned men of the sea, who had been summoned to Washington from various navy yards and ships within the month. Of all on board she was the only civilian, and yet the one whom the Government seemed most anxious to transport. The officers themselves gathered into little groups, discussing the war which had opened so abruptly, and speculating as to why in such an important crisis they had been ordered from their posts of duty to report for further advices and

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sealed instructions at so unimportant and isolated a seaport as the small one on the coast of Florida to which they were heading.

Another singular feature of this journey was that all aboard, from the distinguished Admiral to the junior Lieutenant Commander, were, by order, in the plainest of civilian dress. That it had been the intention of the War Department to maintain their identity secret was proved by the comments of a railway official who stood near one of the coaches while waiting for a change of locomotives.

"You understand, don't you," he said to a man apparently a train dispatcher standing beside him, "that this train has the right of way over everything? Sidetrack the flyer if necessary to get this through. There can't be anything in front of her, and the only limit to her time is the speed of the engine that pulls her. I understand it's a party of Secret Service people the Government is sending to Cuba. That's all I know about it, and it's in line with everything else you naturally can expect from such a lot of insane men as they seem to have in Washington."

They whirled away from the station, looking at each other blankly, and wondering what the outcome of all this mystery could be. Every action so far was without precedent. There was a disposition on the part of some of them to bemoan the fate which had detached them from their ships at a

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time when the country was to be defended and glory won; but this was brought to a sudden end by grim old "Fighting Bob" Bevens, the Admiral, who reprimanded them for daring to criticise their superiors or their orders.

"I don't know what it's all about, boys," he said, relenting. "I wish I did; but I have no more knowledge of it than you have. I don't even know why Miss Roberts is aboard; but this much I am certain of: that the men in Washington know what they are doing, and all the rest of the world can just keep on criticising and guessing. As far as we are concerned, we are officers who have sworn to and will obey orders, even if they tell us to go to the outer edge of the flat earth."

Darkness came on them before their next stop was made, and they slowed down as they passed through the yards of a large city, felt their puffing locomotive being uncoupled, and heard the slow resonant snorts of a fresh one being driven into place. They were tired of the day's traveling, and sat in listless silence, looking through the open windows at the half deserted platforms. Newsboys were running here and there offering the latest editions, and they called them to the side of the coach and bought newspapers from them. The silence in the car was broken by the Admiral, who had been the first purchaser.

"Well, I'll be blanked!" he said, angrily

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crumpling his paper into a ball which he threw on the floor at his feet, before he began striding up and down the aisle. What he had read beneath flaring headlines was this:

“WASHINGTON, May 28.—The Japanese have taken the Hawaiian Islands, together with the gunboats Marietta and Corbett, and are now landing troops from a large transport. The incredible and disgraceful feature of the affair is that not a gun was fired by either side, our officers contenting themselves by running up the white flag when the enemy approached. The cable operator sending the message said that he did so under the surveillance of two Japanese officers, who at the conclusion of the message would disconnect the cable, thus putting the islands out of communication.

CHAPTER III

WHEN THE FLAG CAME DOWN



THE Government was compelled to take action toward pacifying its own subjects immediately after the news of the Hawaiian surrender, public indignation having risen to the point where the people threatened to take matters into their own hands. Without a dissenting voice the journals of the country came forth with scathing editorials, occasionally asking the President whether it was the intention of the administration to run up a white flag as soon as a fast approaching enemy neared the shores, and thus surrender the whole United States. Therefore an appeal for patience was issued in the following terms:

“The President and his Cabinet, acting for and empowered by Congress in special session, most urgently ask the people of the United States to withhold judgment on the conduct of the war for at least a week longer; when it will be fully demonstrated that the Government is following a well defined policy, which will not only avert blood-

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shed, but will impose no disgrace upon our country. The exigencies of the situation are such that to make public our plans would be to defeat our own ends. We therefore ask the earnest support and coöperation of the people of the United States by such means as lie within their power, which at this time can be shown best by a cessation of mass meetings and criticisms tending only to embarrass the Government in the discharge of its duty and the bringing to a successful termination the conflict which is now on."

Contrary to the usual form of proclamation, this one was signed not only by the President but by all members of his Cabinet, who therefore jointly assumed the responsibility. At first there was an inclination to deride the message, and then when more sober thought prevailed a spirit of fairness dictated that the administration should have its chance.

Foreign advices indicated that no attack might be expected against the shores of the United States proper for even a greater length of time than ten days; hence the respite of seven days seemed a reasonable limit within which the Government might demonstrate its theories.

It was possible that the public temper would have remained passive for the full period, but for a somewhat unfortunate and graphic description

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of what had taken place in the Philippines, cabled by the correspondent of a London paper, who had been on the scene, and which read as follows:

“The surrender of the Philippine Islands by the United States to Japan constitutes what is probably the most remarkable chapter in the history of wars. Not only was there no battle fought nor any attempt made at defense, but what is worse, or would seem so to any man with red blood in his veins, is the humiliation imposed upon the Americans by their home Government. To an impartial observer it would appear that nothing but madness could dictate such a policy. The facts of the case are as follows:

“Although trouble had been expected with Japan by every reasoning inhabitant of the islands for many months, the Government at Washington apparently made no attempt whatever to strengthen its position, and, on the contrary, seemed rather endeavoring to weaken it. As the whole world knows, there have been immense and costly fortifications under progress of construction in the islands for the last ten years. More than thirty days ago, by official order, work on these defenses was summarily stopped, the workmen discharged, and the engineers ordered home. This was the first act of treachery toward the Philippines.

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“Immediately following this incomprehensible action all war vessels in waters surrounding the islands and on the Pacific station were ordered to ports in Europe, where they rendezvoused in what can never be anything but neutral territory. And there they are at this moment, thousands of miles from the scene of conflict, incapable of either offense or defense. Had the Government deliberately chosen to put itself out of touch with the whole war, it could have selected no more effective method. Your correspondent has had the honor of an intimate friendship not only with the civil officials of the islands but with the men of the army and navy as well, and is therefore in a position to give trustworthy and detailed information of what at this time seems little less than an infamy.

“It had been known for some days that orders of a most remarkable nature had been received by the Governor of the islands and the commanding General. What these were, however, remained a secret until that memorable day of May.

“At ten o'clock on the morning of May 27 a cloud of smoke became visible on the horizon, and when within range of the glasses it was discovered that in the offing floated two cruisers of the first class and one battleship, flying the Japanese flag and cleared for action. The officer in command of the fort at once communicated this fact to the Governor, and a consultation was called, to which

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all officials of both branches of Government were summoned. Inasmuch as the gravity of the situation required the absolute concurrence of all concerned, the consultation was not confined to men of high rank, but included every commissioned officer from the army and every official of standing in the civil government. The men, wondering at this strange call, and aware that something unexpected had happened, responded to the summons and repaired to the Governor's office, where they seated themselves silently, and waited for that executive to address them. He, a man grown gray in the diplomatic service of his nation, paced up and down the room as if loath to speak.

“ ‘Gentlemen,’ he began, ‘it is not within my province to criticise the acts of the department which I represent nor to find fault with its desires, and yet I have before me at this moment the most humiliating instructions which in more than forty years of life in a responsible capacity I have ever received.’

“ He stood for a few moments, as if dreading to tell his auditors of his country's shame, and then with trembling hand opened a drawer of his desk and took out a file of official documents, which he held before him as he continued:

“ ‘At the time when work was stopped on the fortifications of this harbor, I received additional

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orders to the effect that in case of any overt act or warlike demonstration upon the part of Japan we were not to make any defense unless it involved the saving of our lives, and to surrender the islands in toto to our enemy.'

"It has been your correspondent's privilege to witness many scenes where the tempers of men were tried as by fire; but never yet has he been compelled to view the deliberate mortification of at least two score of valiant men in such a peremptory and unheard of manner. They sat as if stupefied by an overwhelming catastrophe, looking at one another as if incredulous and doubting their own hearing, and then suddenly broke into angry exclamations of surprise and indignation. By a most remarkable display of authority they were brought into subjection again, the commanding General, a man at almost retiring age, rising before them and holding up a warning hand. 'Gentlemen,' he said, quietly rebuking them, 'our first duty is that of obedience.'

"The officers, looking at one another, settled into their seats, and in almost an instant the silence in the room had grown painful. The Governor, still holding his papers before him, slowly continued:

"'Fearing trickery on the part of a prospective enemy, I doubted the authenticity of my instructions. I used a secret code which has never gone

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beyond the hands of the most confidential men in my department, and to my surprise received absolute confirmation. To you of the army I will say that before this verification was received, your General,' and here he turned to his white haired confrère, 'had been the recipient of a command from the Secretary of War of the United States couched in almost the same terms.'

"At the conclusion of his speech, this fine old man sank back into his chair with bowed head as if the disgrace of his country was his own. There was a more or less dignified discussion participated in by the older officers present; but interrupted now and then by some of the younger men, who favored totally ignoring the orders, and defending the islands to the death. The cooler heads among them prevailed, and at last it was recognized that there was no alternative save absolute and unqualified surrender.

"Before the meeting could be officially dispersed the sullen boom of a gun came heavily from the sea, reverberating through the room. The men sprang to their feet and rushed toward the exit, knowing that war was upon them, but that their hands were tied as hopelessly as though bound with manacles of steel.

"There, within range of their own heavier guns, floated a formidable fleet from Japan. Even while their conference was in progress, cruiser after

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cruiser and floating forts of steel had crept up over the horizon. The Japanese gunners were testing their range; but no damage had been done. I saw a procession of crestfallen men, going as if to a funeral, enter their fortress gates and silently gather round the great flagstaff, from which floated a hitherto unsullied banner. A grim old man grown gray in war and scarred with the marks of many battles, walked to the halyards, gave them a pull, and brought fluttering to the ground the flag under which he had fought so valiantly. A Colonel of his staff took from the hands of an orderly a cloth of white, the emblem the world over of defeat with or without honor, fastened it into the idle loops, and pulled it aloft.

“The General, a warrior no longer, but a heart-broken old man, turned away from his colleagues, walked across the parade, and the door of his quarters closed upon him. Several other members of his staff did likewise, and still others stood silent on the ramparts, watching the outcome of this event. The ships ceased firing, and, as if perplexed by this unwarranted outcome, seemed to be communicating with each other, dexterously wigwagging signal after signal. A torpedo boat destroyer slowly separated itself from the flotilla and came suspiciously nosing its way toward the land, winding in and out as if fearing floating mines or sunken engines of destruction.

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“As it neared the shore, it was seen that on its black deck stood the Admiral of the fleet, together with his staff. They were met at the landing by a deputation of officers, both civil and military, who escorted them to the fort. No one can depict the expressions, half surprise and half inquiry, which overspread the countenances of this insignificant invading force. A party of less than ten men without arms was actually accomplishing the most remarkable conquest in all history.

“At the entrance to this city of masonry and steel, equipped with silent monsters of warfare, embodying all the latest and most formidable instruments of offense and defense, built to withstand the onslaught of the combined navies and armies of the world, stood the sullen, shamefaced officers of the vanquished garrison, the guilt of their full dress uniforms untarnished by powder or smoke, and shining garishly in a midday sun. There, drawn up in line, were men who would have fought to death and gone exultantly out into another world rather than face the disgrace which had now been heaped upon them by an unworthy clique of superiors in office.

“The Japanese Admiral advanced to the sacrificed but not defeated General and extended his hand, offering the commonplace courtesies of the day. There was no need of an interpreter, the head of the victorious force speaking the English

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he had learned at the United States Naval Academy, in which he had been educated.

“ ‘Am I right, sir,’ he said, ‘in construing that white flag you raised as a sign of truce? And if that is so, I should like to be informed as to why at the same time you lowered the United States flag from the peak?’ ”

“The General choked with mortification, hesitated for a moment, and then found himself unable to express his relinquishment in words. He slowly withdrew his sword from its belt hooks, and held it, hilt foremost, toward the Admiral, who seemed unable to realize that it was tendered in surrender. There was a moment’s silence, in which he looked down at that trusty old blade of steel, never before dishonored by a conqueror’s hand. He glanced inquiringly at his fellow countrymen, and then at the others, as if questioning their sanity.

“ ‘I regret to say, sir,’ the General answered, ‘that the flag was raised in surrender not only of this fortification, but of all military forces on the islands.’ ”

“The Admiral gave a quick start of surprise and jubilation as the significance of this unexpected action dawned upon him.

“ ‘The total surrender of the Philippines?’ he questioned, as if it was beyond comprehension that without further effort this island kingdom of

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the sea was tranquilly to be turned over to the first enemy who battered a challenge on its gates.

"The General, beyond words, nodded in confirmation. In a few quickly spoken sentences, the Admiral translated the details of the conversation to his compatriots.

"Goaded by the sneers and satirical exclamations with which this was greeted, the General broke into a sudden blaze of wrath, shook a clenched fist under the Admiral's very nose, and in white heat exclaimed, 'Yes, it comes easy; but it's no fault of mine! I'm obeying orders. If I had my way I'd have seen you in hell before this happened. I would, so help me God!'

"As a signal to the waiting fleet, they ran aloft the rising sun emblem of Japan, while the discomfited officers of the United States retired to the barracks for the almost hopeless attempt of explaining the situation to the puzzled garrison. These were soldier like, quick moving, wiry men from the West, proud of their country and their crops, and were of the kind that could not understand dishonor through mere obedience to higher orders. They stormed and swore, and for a time it seemed that mutiny would spread throughout the fortress, man the great guns, tear down the flag of Japan, and send hurtling masses of defiant steel out into the ranks of that force which had come upon them in a night and won an unearned

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victory. But they too were creatures of discipline, and in the end reluctantly accepted fate.

“The great armada slowly gathered way and crept forward almost beneath the towering walls of the silent forts. Boat after boat brought its load of marines ashore and discharged them on ground which in other wars had been stained with the blood of valorous men. Here on these beaches had stepped the armies of Old Spain, coming as pioneers to battle with savage foemen. In former years the waters of this bay on another day in May had floated the vessels of brave Dewey’s fleet, had rocked and quivered beneath the impact of his guns, and witnessed the raising of his victorious flag over smoldering ramparts. And with such a history of glory behind it, the moon on this night rose over a land, silent, conquered, and abandoned, as if it was of no more value than a tiny pebble cast into a tropical sea.”

CHAPTER IV

THE HARNESS OF WAR



BREATH of summer swept over the land, giving promise of wealth of bloom and prodigality of harvest; but the plow stood idle and rusted in the waiting fields, the meadows went unshorn, and the crops, in which lay the riches of peace, unplanted. Everywhere was the growing din of anarchy and the stern clangor of war. A people who had never tamely bowed a head beneath a yoke, nor rebelled at just ruling, found themselves distraught in the whirling current of unreasonable tides which carried them out to they knew not what.

A tame yielding of territory over which their flag had once flown, an equally passive surrender of islands which had come to them of their own volition, seeking in the spread of the eagle's wings the shadows of security, and, last of all, as a crowning climax of folly, the sending of warships to neutral ports! From east to west, as the oceans run, from the border line of the North to that of the South, there swept over the great waiting

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nation a call to arms. No dam built by mortal man could have stemmed that rising tide of indignation save the one that was erected by the administration in the hours of its stress. News of it came unheralded as had all the ominous stories preceding it.

Even at the moment when an overthrow of the governing power at Washington seemed imminent, there flashed across the wires from Governor to Governor the quick and insistent demand for fighting men. In every armory was heard the resounding clash of rifles. A hundred thousand men, drilled for the emergencies of a country's need, sprang to their weapons like tensely strung warriors of old awaiting the Pretor's command to charge. A country, which through days of defeat had seemingly slept, sprang into the harness of strife, as if electrified by the God of Battles. Simultaneously with the ordering out of all National Guardsmen and a further call for volunteers, which received instant response, every railway traversing the country was requisitioned by the War Department.

Yet, in all this turmoil the destination of this suddenly mobilized and splendidly powerful army remained a secret. In vain the press of the country and its most influential citizens demanded knowledge; but not till the day when from all directions swarms of armed men sallied forth, was

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this information given. And as if blackened by a scourge of locusts, the Canadas awakened one morning to find that along three thousand miles of border land were spread a line of soldiers, the most singular line of repulse ever stretched between nations. It was one of excommunication.

Not even the commanding officers as they took their stations knew the whys or wherefores of this most remarkable move, although their instructions were of the simplest, and were that under no circumstances were there to be acts of unfriendliness nor, even under provocation, movements of aggression. They were to stand as an insurmountable barrier between the United States and the Dominion, prohibiting traffic, passage, and communication, and nothing more. No man might cross the border, and wires which in days of peace carried from one country to another the news of the day were cut and torn from their poles as if no further word might ever be transmitted through them.

Nor was this all. Wherever a cable touched on all the outer edges of this great land might be found soldiers in charge. Wireless telegraph stations were abruptly closed, prohibiting the use even of the air itself. Proclamations were issued that instructions had been given for the perforation of any airships attempting outside communication, and the penalty of instant death was

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threatened any aeronaut who disobeyed this command.

From every seaport vessels of all nations, friendly or unfriendly, were summarily excluded. Protests from Captains and from companies were ignored. The United States was suddenly blockading not only its own means of communication, but sealing its ports as well. No message might be carried in or out, and, as if fearing also for its southern border line, the soldiers of the regular army were placed there. The vessels of the navy which were in the home waters of the Atlantic were put on patrol duty, steaming up and down the eastern coast with the regularity of policemen on their beats. To the world at large the United States of America might never have been. The fabled Atlantis of old could have disappeared no more completely nor been cut off more effectually from intercourse with outside mankind than was the great American nation.

Whatever criticism and surprise had been caused among other Powers by the abandonment of the Philippines and the Hawaiian Islands was outdone by this latest move. Never before in the world's history had a nation enforced complete isolation upon itself, withdrawing within its shell as does a turtle when assailed. Hitherto it had been the custom of a people attacked to maintain an outward seeming of uninterrupted commerce

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and unimpeded communication. No modern Government had yet had the temerity to shut its ports to friendly nations, scorn intercourse with them, and trust to its own resources for support and maintenance. Protests from friendly Powers were unheeded or unavailing, because after a few days there was no possibility of conveying such remonstrance to the officials at Washington.

In the Capital itself representatives of foreign nations, hearing of this embargo on the ports, stood upon their rights and demanded either their dismissal or the free and uninterrupted passage of their communications. Some of the more importunate ones were politely told that they might take their departure at any time they deemed fit; but were given warning that it must be within forty-eight hours or they would not be permitted to pass the border line. These discomfited diplomats either hastened to the nearest harbor, embarking upon the last steamer leaving, or chose to remain within the country.

The maritime nations of Europe, aghast at what they termed the insolence of the United States, discussed means of bringing her to book and compelling her to open her roadsteads; but found a lack of unanimity as to method. Great Britain, jealous of Germany, but fearing a swift onslaught from the Kaiser's realm, hesitated to take the initiative and thus leave her own coasts

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exposed to attack. France, with the memory of an earlier war, remained passive. Russia, smarting under the recollection of her own defeat, refused to take any steps which directly or indirectly might aid Japan. And the smaller nations awaited a leader.

England was placed in the most peculiar and trying position of all. The last official utterance of the United States to a foreign Power had been to her, in the positive assertion that, come what might, she of all nations need have no fear of being embroiled, and that under no circumstances need she apprehend war with America.

The English Ambassador, who was one of the last to take timely advantage of his opportunity and seek a temporary residence in Montreal, cabled his country a frank admission that the policy of the United States was completely beyond his comprehension, and that whatever of the situation might be known from personal observation would be explained by his secretary, Guy Hillier, due at any moment in London. The ears of Europe were therefore open for such communications as might be imparted by this young man, who for the moment became of paramount importance.

Thus it was that Hillier, arriving at the Liverpool docks, found himself the center of all interest.

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A swarm of newspaper correspondents, more or less distinguished in their profession, sought interviews; but, warned in advance by wireless telegraph, he declined all conversation. The wharf was black with people, who anxiously craned their necks to catch sight of the man who was expected to elucidate the greatest mystery of the age. A guard of constables formed a hollow square round him and forced their way up the long, tunnel like shed leading to the train which was to convey him to London.

When he had gained his seat in a compartment reserved for his use, and the train whirled away past neatly walled farms, prosperous villages, and great cities, he wondered at the strange trend of events which had thrown him so prominently into the foreground. He smiled in irony as he reviewed his own actual knowledge of the situation, and realized how little he had in the way of information in comparison with what he was expected to divulge.

At Euston Station he was escorted to a carriage, and whistled a soft note of surprise as he recognized on the panels the Prime Minister's coat of arms. Plainly he was to be subjected to what in America he had heard called the "Third Degree." Surreptitious nods were interchanged by a crowd of loungers, and such comments as "That's him!" and "'E's the bloke w'ats goin' to tell us abaout

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it!" floated to him as the footman slammed the door behind, mounted the box, and whipped the team into a gallop.

He was ushered into the sacred precincts of the Prime Minister's private chamber, and found awaiting not only that important person but the Foreign Secretary, and a Lord of the Admiralty as well. The ponderously sealed packet from his Ambassador was torn open and read aloud. It contained the following startling statement from his perturbed and irate superior:

"I have the honor to inform Your Lordship that I am in a country evidently inhabited by maniacs. I have painstakingly sought a logical explanation for the acts of this Government, and frankly admit that I am unable to understand either its attitude toward His Majesty's Government, its proposed plan of campaign, or what the effect of this war will be upon other nations. I have been persistently refused any intimation as to what has taken place or is intended. In a personal interview with His Excellency, the President of the United States, I have been positively informed that his country will under no circumstances permit any demonstration against Great Britain, but that it may become necessary to suspend intercourse for a time. I cannot tell what is meant by this, nor would he give me further in-

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formation. The attitude of the administration, backed up by Congress, is that of supreme egotism and self sufficiency, despite the position taken by the people and the press, as shown in newspapers which are sent herewith. In view of the uncertainty of the situation, the enigma presented by the United States Government's attitude, and the threat that within forty-eight hours all exchange of communication will be suspended, I deem it wise to suggest that His Majesty hold himself in readiness to make an overpowering naval demonstration in these or Canadian waters, if need should arise. I am sending this by my secretary, who can answer any questions of a more pertinent nature as well as I could."

The letter, written in the crabbed hand of the Ambassador, was slowly read aloud, those present straining their hearing that no word might be lost, and at its conclusion they sat dumbfounded.

"You were there, I believe," said the Prime Minister, slowly swinging back and forth in his swivel chair, and addressing the secretary, "when the news of the surrender of the Philippines was received?"

"Yes, Your Lordship."

"What excuse had the Government to make for such unwarranted action?"

"None whatever."

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“Do you mean to say that they suffered without protest or defense the surrender of a fortification which cost millions of pounds, was adequately equipped, and able to repel successfully the attack of such a fleet as Japan sent against it?”

“Yes, they even accepted it complacently.”

From round the room came murmurs of amazement, while the rustle of newspapers showed the anxiety of those present to glean what information they could by perusal. Losing their phlegmatic air of self possession and casting official dignity to the winds, they bombarded Hillier with questions, which in the main he was unable to answer. The voice of the stately Lord of the Admiralty rose above the others in a sudden, insistent petulant question.

“Do you know anything else worth while?” he asked.

“No,” answered Hillier, “I have no knowledge other than that which I have given to you, and which in itself was gathered elsewhere than from an absolutely silent and secretive Government.”

The Prime Minister, as if recognizing their informant's plight, in a friendly tone of voice said, “Mr. Hillier, I presume you are tired after your journey and would like to rest before any further discussion of this subject. I would suggest that you go to your chambers and return here to-morrow.”

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"What sense is there in his returning?" came the angry question of the Lord of the Admiralty, as the secretary bowed himself out of the room. "He doesn't even know, I presume, that Japan is already sending every available ship she has against the western coast of America as fast as steam will carry it."

Sending an invading fleet against an apparently passive country in some part of which was the woman he loved! This thought reiterated itself through Guy's mind as he passed down the corridor and out into the din and movement of the street. Where could she be now, he wondered, and what of her father? Insane, perhaps, and incapable of offering her protection of which she would stand so sadly in need in case of Japanese success. The words of a letter which he carried in his pocket, and which to him was of more importance than the dispatches he had delivered, constantly recurred to him:

"It is always within the realms of possibility, when war is on a land, that friends may never meet again. If such should be our case, I pray that you will remember this, even up to the last,—I loved you."

In the dusk of early evening an army of countless men and women hurrying to the trams, the tubes, and the buses, swept past him ignorant of his misery. What was war to them in a country

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thousands of miles across a sea and in which perhaps there was none bound to them by ties of affection? The United States might isolate itself by sea and intrench itself behind cordons of soldiers; but he would go back! Yes, he would find a way to pass all their barriers and gain the side of the woman who merited his protection through her avowed love, and in this, her hour of need, seemed crying out to him across the uttermost spaces of the world, beseeching him to return,—only to return!

CHAPTER V

IN SECRET PATHS



IPPON, the home of the Samurai, in her adoption of newer methods, had not permitted her secret service department to remain in ancient form. Modeled on those lines which had made the intelligence bureau of Russia one of the most effective in the entire world, and profiting by the publicity given to nearly every movement of importance in the United States, she was minutely informed of all that had been and was taking place in the country she hoped to overcome. She had depended upon this knowledge as a valued factor for the subjugation of the American colossus, not foreseeing that a country capable of closing its doors to the world would also find means to circumvent foreign agents. To the last minute she relied upon her emissaries in nearly all the larger cities of America under the direction of Count Seigo.

Away back in the time of the Tokugawa Shogunate, when the almost invincible leader Seigo was an idol to the youth of Satsuma to be top-

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pled over only in the civil war of 1877, his son was being educated in a leading American university. The downfall of the father practically exiled the lad in the United States until family and political influence had time to reassert itself, when by progressive steps he gained the good graces of his Government and was given responsible positions in affairs of state. His knowledge of the American political situation was complete and accurate, and no man was better informed on the strength and weakness of the Republic.

It had been largely through his advice that the dispute between the two nations, trivial in itself but portentous in possibilities, had been used as a pretext for war. Thoroughly conversant with congressional methods in the United States, he had watched year by year the quibblings of legislators over naval bills which usually ended in inadequate appropriations. Of broader mind than they, he had long foreseen that a country which had come into distant colonial possessions must of necessity enlarge its navy and augment its efficiency, expend money in unremitting streams for its maintenance, and stimulate its men to seek individual excellence in gunnery and drill. He had observed the growth of conceit, which, like rust beneath a coat of paint, led men to believe so devoutly in American superiority that they neglected to analyze the actual power which could

positively be developed. By a process of elimination he estimated the fighting value of the American navy, discarding vessels still in service but obsolete, and others still on paper but looked upon by the unsophisticated as a part of the nation's strength. National prowess he regarded as a small factor when granting equality.

Seigo's observations had been so careful and his conclusions so logical, that reports sent to and passed upon by the Elder Statesmen of Japan had led them to feel certain of victory long before war was declared. Nor had his predictions in the opening events been unfulfilled. True he had not expected the abandonment of the Philippines; but he had confidently foretold the period of torpidity, of confusion and lack of cohesion, which had followed. It was with satisfaction, therefore, that he observed the trend of events when hostilities were finally declared, and from the quietude of his study saw the whole country waiting for the Government to act while apparently it remained somnolent.

The surrender of the islands came as the first perplexing problem for which he could neither account nor understand, and his activities prior to that event were nothing when compared with those subsequent. He was too adroit ever to have appeared as a laborer in the limelight, and was therefore eminently fitted to drop from sight at the outbreak, when his fellow countrymen were

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leaving by hundreds seeking places of refuge across the border lines north and south or embarking on the high seas for foreign ports. Singularly enough, race prejudice in the Eastern States had never reached the point of acute discrimination which made the denizens of that section classify the Japanese and Chinese in one broad category as Orientals; it was therefore easy for Seigo to don the garb of a laundryman in the city of Washington, improvise a pigtail, and without interruption assume to pursue this vocation.

Fertile of resource, he readily discovered that in a situation where anarchy might thrive the followers of the blood red flag would be his most valuable spies. Without difficulty he allied himself with this element, and gained a friendly footing with them by ostensibly favoring the advancement of their cause in Russian domains. Their confidence in him was strengthened by the fact that he was accomplished in their language, which he spoke fluently, and was a liberal contributor to their treasury.

Having thus ingratiated himself, the next step was made easy. He selected such tools from the ranks of these malcontents as seemed best fitted to his hands, and thereby established a means of securing news that would have been impossible in any other way. From his little hovel he directed these men as seemed best, assigning them to tasks

of more or less magnitude, and paying lavishly for anything of value; and to his obscure place there came divers men when night time offered the cloak of darkness to the furtive.

Seigo's most valuable ally was one Meredith, of English parentage, and a man who for years resided on Cross-st., Paterson, New Jersey, that unfortunate city whose very industry and peacefulness had made it the gathering place of the Reds. Meredith was a machinist by trade, and an employee of a supply house; so it was not surprising that he brought news of strange and unusual purchases made through many sources by the United States Government. In this there was nothing alarming, and it was rather with curiosity that the astute descendant of a Samurai looked over these reports and vaguely wondered whether they might have bearing on war. He was sufficiently painstaking to ask for others and check them up; but in this he gained nothing beyond the certainty that the Navy Department, while existing in a state of seeming stagnation, was inwardly very active. He made many trips to the points where these purchases were made, but found them innocuous in so far as he could reason.

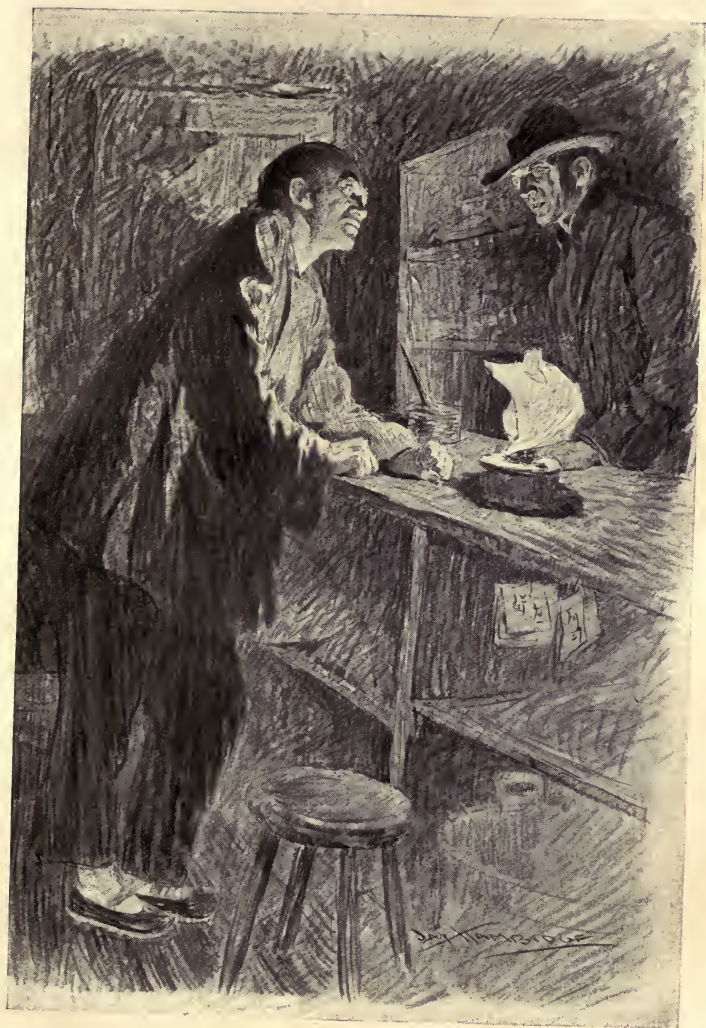
As time went on, however, he learned that the greater portion of these shipments were being sent to Miami, Florida, and was driven to the final conclusion that if the Government was active in any

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way at all, the key must be at the small city on the southeastern coast. News had leaked through to him to the effect that the ships of the United States were scattering out over many seas instead of mobilizing in western waters. More than this, Seigo learned that in all navy yards there had been a cessation of work, whereas an increase would have seemed more reasonable, considering the unfinished state of several cruisers and battleships.

On first thought he attributed this latter lapse to one of the frequent changes of policy or a dearth of funds, but now, in view of these later shipments and purchases, he began to question. In Washington no news was obtainable. The administration was preserving a wooden front toward not only the world but its own people as well. Congressmen and Senators knew nothing beyond the declaration of war and the empowering of the President and his Cabinet in special session to act for the country, and the administration was apparently doing nothing whatever out of the regular routine of business. It was this paucity which drove the sham laundryman from his irons and away upon a journey.

His trip southward was accomplished with ridiculous ease. He bought his ticket to Miami without being subjected to interrogation, boarded the second class or smoking coach at the head of the train without hindrance, and rode away in un-



“He brought news of strange and unusual purchases.”

disturbed solitude. No one seemed aware or in any event to care for his presence. There were no attempts at conversation, except in one instance where a good natured Southerner hailed him with, "Hello, John! Going to start a wash shop somewhere?" nor was he in the least perturbed save on an occasion when a rough threatened to tweak his pigtail; but even this went no further than words. Everywhere were criticisms of the conduct of the war and imprecations against the administration. The Americans themselves were no more cognizant than he of why soldiers had been stretched along the border line, ports closed, and communication cut off. The citizens of the country itself were as mystified as the Japanese, and frankly thought the situation a foolish one. In all that long journey down the eastern coast he learned nothing whatever of importance.

His delayed train dropped him off late at night in the Florida town, and he was compelled to seek lodging with strangers or to sleep in the open. He chose the latter course, and went out below the city, across the bridge, and toward the Punch Bowl, where he found rest beside the road till early morning. When the first rays of the sun were filtering through the great trees and drenching the creepers with light, he returned to the city, assisted on his way by a kindly farmer who was driving in for supplies.

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From him he learned where the Chinese laundries were situated; but could gather nothing whatever confirming his suspicions that the Government was either in possession of a plant at this point or even conducting any experiments in the vicinity.

Still disguised and acting upon what had been told him, he sought the abode of the Chinaman, who was already sweating over his tubs, and found him amenable to persuasion and desirous of giving assistance when paid considerable sums of protection money. His horn of plenty was a golden one, but proved useless in a day of fruitless effort, his most careful inquiries bringing nothing in the way of return. Tired and discouraged, he passed the early part of the night in sleep from which he was aroused by nightmares of horror and forebodings of failure, his mental state robbing him of rest.

In the hope that fatigue would cure insomnia, he donned his clothing and sauntered away through the deserted streets, his heavy leather soles clumping upon board walks and across sandy patches. It was past one o'clock in the morning, and all was still. He wandered idly along the main thoroughfare, and reached the far end of the town, before his attention was attracted by a sound from the water front, where hollowly through the stillness a steam winch was chugging and sputtering as it toiled away with its load. It brought him

to a quick halt and aroused in his mind a multitude of questions, because along the entire shore line of this great country no craft was now loading and none arriving, according to his knowledge. He hastily directed his steps toward the wharves, stealthily seeking the shadows of the palm trees, and stopping now and then to avoid any chance of being observed.

Lying against the pier was a small gunboat of the United States navy, which was receiving supplies, and the men at work were evidently hurrying at their utmost. The vessel had not been there during the daylight hours,—of this he was certain,—hence her loading at night could indicate but one thing, a desire for secrecy. His nerves keyed up in the hope of a discovery, alert and inquisitive, he crept close to the freight shed where the arc lights threw huge spots of white.

So this accounted for the disposal of those mysterious orders which had been reported to him by Meredith and others! But where could they be bound? What was the destination of this ship which, even as he watched, was casting off her lines preparatory to sailing away into the night?

In his anxiety he was on the verge of rushing out and trusting to any convenient pretext, when a boy came hurrying past him, whistling as he went and homeward bound. Here was the spy's opportunity, and he accepted it. He hailed the lad, and

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in pigeon English told him he wanted to get aboard the vessel if he could.

"Well, you can't do it," came the response. "If you wanted to git on, why didn't you run after the ship instead of stopping me."

"Where she go?" queried Seigo.

"Oh, you want to know where she's going now, do you, Mr. Chink. Well, a fellow on the dock said she was going to Guantanamo, and that means you couldn't go on her if you wanted to."

Then with a derisive laugh he took up the strain of his melody at exactly the same place he had left off when accosted, thrust his hands into his pockets, and continued his way.

Seigo was elated. That accounted for it, then! The United States was playing some crafty game, using its Cuban naval station as a base; was conducting some experiment or outfitting some strange expedition with necessities that could not be obtained in the big island to the south. The only perturbing thought was that the navy, instead of being inactive, had some secret task on hand which had been taken away from home stations. He decided he must return to Washington with this single strand of information and there endeavor to secure others. He watched the lights of the ship grow dim, and then as furtively as he had come returned to the home of the laundryman.

The latter counted his pay and wondered why

his guest departed for the North on the early train of that morning. Seigo offered no explanations for his erratic action, and as he traveled to Washington he was in a gleeful mood. In due time he arrived, and once more ensconced himself in his headquarters, hoping within a few days to gain more complete knowledge. He was handicapped in his quest, however, because he had no actual means of access to Government circles where such data as he wished might best be obtained. But again accident favored him, and again it was in the night when he sallied forth.

The hour was very late when Meredith brought him word that several visitors had called upon the President, and, not trusting to others a mission so important, he took upon himself the task of spying upon the great white building where the ruler of the country lived. From the darkness of his alleyway he emerged into a broader street, when an automobile went chugging past him, and then, just as it came beneath the rays of an arc light, a face leaned to the window, an arm was extended evidently for the purpose of shaking the ash from a cigar, and Seigo shrank back. In the shivering white rays he recognized as one of the passengers in the machine no less a personage than the President, and with him was another man whom he believed to be the Secretary of War.

From down the road came the sound of another

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motor, which in turn whizzed rapidly along, taking the same direction as the previous car. Seigo was not certain, but conjectured that within it were other officials, and, being a man of action, unhesitatingly dashed after it, neared the closed tonneau, and after a breathless run succeeded in swinging himself to the springs behind, maintaining his place by clutching the overhang of the fenders.

Away through the outskirts he rode, hearing nothing from within and in constant danger of falling off his precarious perch. The car gained speed until his peril was great, for to be thrown would be to receive certain injury. His fingers were strained convulsively in their effort to hold on, and once he was almost cast off by a sharp declivity in the road. Now he could only trust to chance that the automobile on which he rode was following that of the President; but as mile after mile was reeled off without a sight of the other machine on either hand, he felt assured that the party was all one. He leaned out across one of the great rubber tires and peered ahead to where now and then he could catch the glow of a red back lamp, and was content. His journey was not without discomfort, as the dust of the road whirled upward and into his nostrils in stifling volume, until he was begrimed and almost strangled; but he clung on grimly, waiting for the mysterious trip to end.

The big car stopped so suddenly that he had scant time to loosen his hold, fall off into the dirt, and roll hastily into a ditch by the roadside where he might be hidden from sight. To his surprise the vehicle turned through a gateway into a field, where he heard the slow crunching of the great wheels over the stubble. He raised himself to his knees, and then in a crouching posture essayed to follow it in its wanderings, when he was arrested by a sharp challenge, betraying the fact that although the visitors had been expected no chance was being taken of entertaining others. Again he threw himself on his face, waiting patiently for other sounds. The great flat before him showed dimly in its yellow bareness, stretching down to where the broad expanse of river gleamed dully, and he could discern other lights than those of the motor on which he had been an undiscovered passenger. These suddenly vanished, and he surmised that the chauffeurs had extinguished them preparatory to leaving the cars. He could trace out no other shapes in the gloom. Not even a building raised its dark bulk in the night. He felt the necessity of advancing farther.

Foot by foot he wriggled forward, the splinters of the field imbedding themselves in his flesh unheeded, straining every nerve to avoid making a noise, and listening at intervals in the hope of catching some word of conversation which might

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give him a clew to the cause of this nocturnal mission. From a short distance ahead came the mutterings of low pitched voices, and then a period of silence. He was past the machines now, still crawling carefully. Once more he paused, when he heard a sullen muffled crash from the direction of the water, and in an agony of surprise and terror rose to his knees, forgetting that he might be observed. His hands interlocked themselves in stress as he watched in breathless suspense for a moment, and then, almost moaning in despair, he crept rapidly back to the road, went cautiously down it for a hundred yards, and took madly to his heels with fright.

All caution was thrown aside, and as he ran like an insane man through the night, with his overworked lungs bellowing in and out until they felt aflame, he burst into sobs, muttering to himself again and again, "Only the gods can save Nippon! The gods help Nippon!"

CHAPTER VI

THE FLIGHT OF SEIGO



EIGO understood at last that the sleeping eagle was preparing to descend from its aerie with mercilessly bared talons. In his flight to the city he counted every moment of value, and through his mind went but one thought: How to get news to Japan in time to avert disaster. What he had witnessed was so convincing that he was amazed at the devilish ingenuity of the Americans, who had led the whole world to believe them defenseless when they were in reality only luring other nations on to their doom. He was filled with resentment. The shoe was on the other foot now, and it made a noticeable difference. When he believed the United States powerless to defend itself, it had been only fit and proper that Japan should harry her, conquer if possible, and gain concessions of territory and money indemnity; but with the knowledge that the country was not only in a position to care for itself but also to conquer an enemy, he viewed things in an entirely different light.

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Worst of all, he realized that he was more largely responsible for the outburst of war than any other man, and aside from the ignominy which must be imposed upon his people was the apprehension of what might happen to his own precious head when resentment chanced to act against him. Yesterday he had been smiling, supercilious, and confident. To-night as he ran, he was terrified, ashamed, and despairing.

Information had come to him that the blockade was complete, and in no instance was he certain that any of his reports had passed through the lines. He rapidly reviewed the chances, and decided that he must get word to every man at his command to strive to pass a warning through to Canadian territory where it might be cabled to Japan. He counted, with Japanese reasoning, on his ability to bribe some one along the border, forgetting that when American patriotism is at full tide money has little weight. He had large funds at command, and in a crisis like this was ready to pour them out lavishly.

His return to the Capital was rapid, as he strained his physical powers to their utmost, and he was almost exhausted when he reached the section where his Chinese ally dwelt. With dragging steps he was turning down a street, when a sharp whispered calling of his name from the depths of a hallway arrested him. Stepping inside, he rec-

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ognized his friend. The instant he was under the cover of darkness he was grasped by the arm and hurried through a doorway and up a flight of stairs. He would have remonstrated at this strange proceeding had not his conductor mumbled, "Come fast and ask nothing! It's your only chance to save your life!"

Through a long corridor where there were no lights, out to a back porch which overhung skeleton like from the building in which the residents were evidently all asleep, down another flight of rickety stairs, and into a vacant space, presumably a back yard, he followed. Not until they reached this secluded place did he have a chance to ask an explanation, and then, before he could formulate a question, it was volunteered.

"The American secret service men have been after you. They are watching the house inside and out. They've seized your papers and everything else in the place. I escaped and brought you money with which to go."

"But my men?"

"Arrested as fast as they came; taken quietly away, and now in prison."

"Meredith too?"

"Yes, he was taken in the street above."

Seigo gasped in astonishment. "But there must be some who got away?"

"No, not even one. You're the only man left."

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The Americans are a terrible people. They have hoodwinked you until the time was ripe, then reached out and caught you all as a fisherman with his net takes in a school of minnows. Even now they are waiting for you, and you'll have to act quick or they will get you too."

The spy felt suddenly that he had underestimated the enemy completely. An involuntary shudder contracted his muscles when he comprehended that not only had he been watched until the propitious time for his taking, but that he had been deliberately played with, an unconscious mouse beneath the eyes of a vigilant cat. Worst of all, this in itself was confirmation that none of the later reports he had sent out to Japan had reached their destination. Probably every message he had dispatched was now in the hands of the Americans. His only hope for conveying warning to his countrymen and for his own life depended on his escape from the clutches of these men, who could appear ignorant and torpid when in reality they were advised and alert. In a burst of impotent anger he shook his fists at the stars. His companion caught his arm.

"Listen!" he said. "You have but one chance. You must get away from Washington to-night. I have a friend, a Canton man, who is a gardener in the outskirts. If we can reach him, he will take you in his wagon to a railway crossing before the

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light comes. There you can get aboard a freight train."

"Go as a tramp?"

"Yes, because all other trains will be searched."

Seigo shrugged his shoulders in disgust. He would have uttered a protest in words had not his companion checked him and continued:

"If you are careful you can get to Chicago, where other friends of mine will help you. Then you must try to reach Canada as best you can."

Seigo hesitated a minute before deciding; but it was obvious that no better means was available. Together the two men crept through alleyways and back streets to the outskirts of the city, until they came to the hovel where lived the truck farmer on whom they placed their hope. He, experienced in the ways of the Americans through long residence in California, and standing in dread of the law, was at first loath to undertake the part assigned to him; but the clink of gold coin overcame his fears, and in the end Seigo sought sleep in the bottom of a covered wagon while being driven to the place where he was to assume a new rôle. He felt alone and deserted when the gardener departed, leaving him standing at an intersection of railway tracks waiting impatiently for a freight train on which he was to make his first excursion into trampdom.

It came at last, a heavy snorting locomotive

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pulling a long trailer of empties. It whistled shrilly for the crossing, watched for a signal from the lonely little tower, and came to a full stop. Seigo, with his heart in his mouth, clambered through the side door of an empty car, and was soon traveling westward to the rhythmic clank of wheels on rails. Fatigue at last overcame him and he slowly dropped into a restless sleep in which he was pursued by demons and confronted by unknown terrors. He was aroused by a brakeman, who roughly punched him in the ribs with the toe of his boot and told him to "Hike out!" He sat up and blinked his eyes until again ordered to vacate, and then came to his senses sufficiently to make a plea for himself, which was unavailing. The brakeman was obdurate and threatening, until the spy crawled stiffly out.

He sat wearily down on a pile of ties, and the brakeman, still watchful, stood in front until the long train dragged past, then reached out a grimy hand, swung lightly onto the steps of the caboose, and shook his fist at the supposed Chinaman as he disappeared. A tramp of the most degraded sort approached him and with the camaraderie of the homeless dropped into conversation with him. Food and rum made him an ally, and, finding an easy source of assistance without effort, the tramp avowed that he too was bound for Chicago.

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Under this expert tutelage the Japanese reached the metropolis of the West, where he bade his friend good by and sought the Chinese to whom he had letters. Again he faced a reverse; for these men with one accord told him there was no possibility of evading the sentries to the north, and that his only means of escape must of necessity be in the far Northwest. Sympathizers first, but traffickers always, they mulcted him of his money, and in return made it possible for him to travel to Seattle. They bought a ticket, provided him with a Chinese certificate of entry whose pictured corner was sufficiently close in resemblance, and saw him off on his journey.

Time and again in that long trip he was dragged out and compelled to show his papers, proving that he was always a suspect. Once a threat was made to hold him over; but his persuasive tongue secured immunity from arrest.

In constant terror until his nerves became shreds to torment him, alert by night and day, he traversed the continent, and at last entered the gateway of the Northwest, where so many of his countrymen had resided prior to the outbreak of hostilities, but where now he might claim neither friends nor sympathizers. Here indeed was a No Man's Land where none extended a welcome. From then on he must depend entirely on his own

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resources, and he understood perfectly well that he was nearing a hard finish of a long race. He lost no time in making a start.

Under the pretext of going to a camp where he was to cook, he induced a launch that was starting out toward the mouth of Puget Sound to take him aboard as a passenger and land him at its journey's end a short distance from Port Townsend. He was dropped off late in the evening at a tiny landing, and later saw the little boat speed back toward Seattle. He was without food save such as had been given him, and tightened the belt beneath his Chinese garb in anticipation of a hard trip. Unused to the rougher life, he made painful progress, and nothing save his desperation enabled him to traverse the primitive strip between him and the city. Footsore and dependent, he forged doggedly ahead, until at last by sheer will power alone he gained the outskirts of the port. Its wooden wharf was deserted, and many of the houses were closed and vacant, the fear of Japanese shells and Government weakness having driven the more prosperous inhabitants away.

Thoroughly worn out, he waited until night fell, then crawled into a coal shed and slept as only the worn and weary can sleep. He rose refreshed and jubilant because he had gained thus far without accident, hunger being his only immediate discom-

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fort. From his depleted store cloth he extracted the smallest coin, bent on seeking food before the city was awake. He made his way down the hillside to the business section without attracting attention, and entered the doorway of a grocery store, where a sleepy looking youth was sweeping away the previous day's waste. In broken English he made known his wants, and then, finding the salesman apparently friendly and stupid, lost some of his native caution and began to ask questions regarding the watch kept along the frontier. At his first query the boy looked at him slyly; but after a moment's hesitation fell in and answered everything readily, assuring him, however, that it would be difficult for any living thing to get past the soldiers who kept watch and ward over the boundary line.

Elated by the apparent ease with which he had secured provisions, he again retreated toward the edge of the city, mentally formulating plans for stealing a boat when night came, and by this means to make his way to Vancouver, where he would be on British soil. Had he looked back he would have seen that the boy, broom in hand, watched him with an assumption of mere idle interest for a moment only, then hurriedly threw off his apron, banged the door shut, and ran as fast as his legs would carry him to a big building farther down the street. It was where the officials

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of the port held forth. The alarm had been given!

Seigo rested in a thicket at the edge of a forest and partook of a leisurely breakfast, laughing meanwhile at the dullness of the Americans and the boy in particular. He regretted the loss of his handkerchief, which he feared must have been dropped in the grocery store, but smiled at the thought of being within so few miles of a refuge where others might be bought and where he could find ease and comfort.

From back of him a deep bellowing sound came faintly through the trees, and he wondered what the unusual noise could be. He rose to his feet, still holding a remnant of food in his hand, and waited for a repetition of the noise, which, borne on the breeze, was heard more sharply. Only once before had he ever known that same sullen bay, and then it was when as a visitor in a southern village he had seen a pack of hounds followed by excited men pass him in quest of a Negro criminal. His memory harked back to that time, and his hair raised itself in terror. He threw away his food and dashed madly into the woods, seeking to escape that menacing undertone which his consciousness told him could have but one quarry. He knew in an instant that the boy had betrayed him, and that he, Count Seigo, a nobleman of Japan and descendant of the Samurai, was be-

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ing hunted by dogs like a wild beast of the woods.

For a few minutes he ran in a panic, taking no heed of direction, and bent only on gaining time to think, and putting space between him and his pursuers. A tangle of undergrowth compelled him to stop and seek for avenues through the wilderness. He ran down what seemed an old deserted road; but on neither side could he find a place favoring a change of course. He was doubling back along the side of a triangle, and was so close at one time to the hounds that he momentarily expected them to break cover, drop the scent afforded by the handkerchief, and cut across to where he was. He could even distinguish the shouts of the men behind, continually encouraging the animals in the chase, and heard one exclaim, "It's the Jap, all right, or he wouldn't have lit out so quick!"

His teeth came together with a click at this confirmation of his suspicions, and now he realized that wherever an officer of the law was posted warning had been given of his coming. He swore that he would yet escape, and urged himself in the name of his country to rush ahead; and thus for many minutes the fate of Japan rested on a race between bloodhounds and a fugitive who tore headlong through the undergrowth, careless of thorns which reached out and scarred his face,

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ripped the false queue from his short cropped bristling hair, and rent his clothing.

Once, blinded with perspiration, he plunged into what appeared to be a pathway; but fell through a tangle at the end, to find himself beside a wayside spring. He gulped three or four swallows of water and retraced his steps, cursing fate for the loss of time, and ran with renewed energy down the roadway. A flash of reflected light smote him in the eyes, and he saw that he had reached the water's edge. At his feet stretched only tossing waves, and like a stag at bay he was driven to the open.

The end seemed very near now; for back of him the harsh clamorings broke out into a triumphal wailing note telling those behind that the quarry had been sighted. The hounds were coming on the run, and round the bend of the road emerged an excited but grimly determined lot of men of that stamp which makes a frontier, set jawed, lean visaged, and running with the long, loping stride of those who are accustomed to sustained violent exertion.

Seigo, distracted and desperate, took a few steps in either direction, uncertain which way to turn, and then discovered but a short distance below a boat in which lay a pair of oars. It was the only way to gain a moment's respite from those great brutes which, with bellies low to

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the ground, with lolling jaws and flaming eyes whose red he could discern, were closing in on him. He made three or four frantic leaps and threw himself into the craft, shoving it off almost as the animals were upon him, and then with maniacal energy threw the oars into the locks and bent himself double pulling against them. Even then at the last he experienced one brief moment of exultation as he heard the swish of parted waters against the bow and saw the space widening between him and the beach on which stood his baffled pursuers. He saw the men halt on the shingle and heard them shouting to him; but never ceased pulling, hoping and half believing that he could put himself beyond range. It was Siego against them all now, and he began to glow with triumph, not knowing the character of those men of the West who still gave him a chance for his life. Drunk with excitement, he shouted back a taunt in his own tongue.

Two of the men on the beach knelt down and aimed their rifles calmly and steadily at that moving target which was drawing away. They were as cool as they would have been if covering a grazing deer in the hills. The rising sun made of the Japanese a fair mark, lighting up even at that distance his sneering face. There were two quick puffs of smoke, which rose simultaneously into the air and floated away in little wisps, two short sharp

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reports, and Seigo sprang to his feet, dropped his hold on the oars, and clutched his breast in agony, whirled round in his wildly bobbing craft, and then slowly pitched forward and over into the waters of the sound, his days of effort terminated in defeat and his mission at an end.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISSING FLEET



JAPAN, grown arrogant through easy success and confident of the supremacy of her navy, cast aside the cloak of secrecy, and boldly announced her intention to attack the seaport cities of the western coast of America. No word had come from Seigo to bid her pause. The most formidable armada that ever sailed the seas, attended by lighters that were to provide coal, and accompanied by transports conveying an army of men, steamed away to the land of easy conquest. In the hope of striking terror into the hearts of those they would subdue, the Japanese announced their purpose, and gave a somewhat exaggerated account of the forces being sent. The newspapers of the world teemed with stories of the sailing of this monster fleet, told how all Japan had shouted "Banzai!" described the flower garlanded maids who sang gay songs, and pictured the remarkable modesty and valor of the Admirals in command.

In some quarters of the globe great sympathy was expressed for the United States, which appar-

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ently had no chance whatever in such an unequal contest, and was foredoomed to calamity and dissolution. The wiseacres of European Powers rose as a unit and told how for more than fifty years it had been repeatedly pointed out that the over-sea colossus was facing destruction through neglect of her navy. Monarchical adherents saw deeper into the cause of a nation's obliteration, asserting that the proof had again been given to the world that a republican form of government was one which, by its very lack of cohesion and unwieldiness, could not exist.

Other advanced thinkers, who looked far into the future, began a discussion as to the final outcome, what partition would be made of the conquered territory, and whether Japan would hold it as a colony for her own surplus population under a regulation colonial gubernation. English writers expressed grave doubts as to Japan's ability to conduct colonies successfully, and were rather of the opinion that the country should be given to Great Britain, whose remarkable success in India and elsewhere had made her the fountainhead in this branch of government. New maps of the world were published in the most progressive periodicals, and souvenir buttons were sold in the streets of Tokio depicting a very valiant little Japanese soldier kicking Uncle Sam into the sea, and taking possession of his land. All the world

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bowed down to do honor to the "brave little brown men," and many aggressive Powers regretted that they had not been the first to think of taking possession of the United States, which their statesmen sometimes spoke of as being a nice little country and capable under reasonable rule of becoming quite a place.

The nation under discussion remained in the same astounding condition of silence and inaction. At first it had seemed that a clash along the Canadian border was inevitable. The massing of such great bodies of troops in such a position appeared almost a threat, and Great Britain in the first instance began hurriedly concentrating forces at points where they would be available in case of attack; but as day after day passed, with no forward move and no action save that of preventing the passage of any person or the transmission of any communication, alarm gave way to bewilderment. Canadian secret service men who succeeded in entering the camps of the soldiers soon returned to report that apparently the troops knew no more of the reason for their being stationed there than did the world at large.

In the meantime there gathered into the sounds, bays, and harbors of foreign ports American vessels of war, which came to anchor and remained. On board these ships were the most disconsolate body of officers and men that were ever collected

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in hulls. The last orders any of them had received had been made so positive, so plain and unequivocal, that they had no choice other than to obey. They had been commanded to gain these neutral berths and under no circumstances to leave them. They were not even permitted to assume the slate color which betokens war on the waters, and therefore retained their dress of immaculate white. They too seemed under the ban, and, like war dogs in leash, strained impotently for action. Nor was there an officer in all these idle and scattered ships who did not wish himself on the waves of the Pacific, across which the enemy's fleet was now forging.

The time advanced until the Japanese warships were due to arrive at Honolulu, where they were to report, coal, and prepare for the final struggle. The cable between Hawaii and Japan, now in possession of the Mikado's operators, continued its daily reports of most favorable weather; but still no squadron hove in sight.

One day, two days, and three, passed before Japan felt anxiety, or the world began its discussion as to the cause of the long delay. Then, when the fleet was more than a week overdue, it became almost a certainty that some disaster had overtaken it, although from no section of the sea had there been a typhoon reported or anything but excellent barometric conditions. Ten days passed

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in this same way, and on the last the report from Honolulu was identical with that which had been made on all those previous: "Nothing in sight, and nothing arrived."

Once more the world stood in expectancy, and vainly sought the solution for the latest enigma. Storms were eliminated; for no tempest could have wiped out such a magnificent body of ships so effectually as to leave none to bear the sad tidings to the nearest port. And then, as a full realization of what must have happened dawned upon the watching Powers, a shudder of dread passed through them all. It was plain that America had some new and terrific naval strength, some unheard of monster of the deep, that gave it the mastery of the seas. The evolution of submarines had been rapid; but no one had knowledge of a craft that could steam such a distance as would have been necessary to intercept the Japanese before they reached Honolulu, engage them, and either destroy them completely or capture and convey them to an American port.

It must have been total destruction, the world argued, because in case of capture great battle-ships themselves would scarcely have been able to make the complete trip to a Pacific coast on the supply of coal they carried in their bunkers. Forced drafts required great expenditure of fuel, and never at any time had there been any other

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intention than of replenishing at Hawaii. It seemed impossible that a civilized nation should have chosen deliberately to exterminate its enemies by wholesale; and yet there was no other conclusion tenable.

How terrific must have been that onslaught, coming up out of the waters of the sea, and how remorselessly executed! All losses of life in previous naval engagements sank into insignificance when compared with this sudden and swift obliteration of a fleet of warships, transports, and colliers. It would be nearly impossible to spare lives in such a battle, and it seemed a certainty that the great steel monsters that had sailed away to easy conquest had become mere metal coffins for those who manned them, and were now resting somewhere on the floor of the heedless Pacific. If such was the case, it was time the United States ceased to exist as a nation, when peopled by inhuman monsters who calmly slew their adversaries when threatened.

Japan was left a helpless little island in the sea, without ships to assail an enemy or to defend herself. Shorn of power and pride, she was plunged as deeply in mourning as only a few weeks before she had been exalted in glory. She plaintively bewailed the barbarities of her enemy, and proudly pointed to her own high state of civilization, which made such warfare impossible. She asserted that

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had she possessed such monsters of destruction as were evidently owned by the United States, she would have scorned to use them without notifying the whole world of her power. It was a country of desolation.

There was hardly a prominent home in Japan which had not contributed some member of its family to that splendid navy which had sailed so proudly away when early June was spreading its flowers over the Empire; now there were sobs of bereavement and woe.

Across the ancient lands of the Pharaohs and up through the provinces of Kings there swept a unanimous desire for an explanation. It could come from only one source,—this land of mystery which had cut itself off from all the world and stood silent, guarding its secret, and suddenly grown ominous in its possibilities and potentialities.

Japan, hopeless and driven to extremities, appealed to her ally, Great Britain, for news. She showed no cowardly spirit by asking for aid of arms, and sought the assistance of her closest friend only that she might gain information. And Great Britain after due consideration responded.

The Premier of the Dominion of Canada was asked in the interests of humanity to pass a communication to the soldiers on the border, asking for particulars of the destruction of the Japanese

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fleet. It was duly accepted and forwarded, and back came the reply:

“The United States has no report whatever to impart on the subject most vitally concerning His Majesty’s closest ally, beyond the fact that the fleet which came to invade the Pacific coast has been duly met, properly vanquished, and rendered incapable of further harm. The United States regrets that such action became necessary, and, with all due respect to Great Britain and such other Powers as may be interested, wishes to express a disinclination to reply to any further communications of this or a similar nature.”

A slap in the face could have caused no greater consternation. The very terms of the reply showed insolence toward all the world, and demanded explanation. But who dared attempt it? What country was brave enough to take the risk of meeting those terrible submarines, which were capable in a night of destroying the most complete flotilla that ever had been mobilized and sent away? If they only knew what form these monsters took, what dire warning they gave as they advanced to the attack, there might be some means of offsetting them or perhaps repelling them. That information, at any cost, must be gained. In its reaching out for anything which might suggest a way, the British ministry sent for Hillier.

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Guy, sleepless and worn from nights and days of anxiety, responded to the call, listlessly wondering what further information he could give as to the situation in America, or what if any duty could be expected of him when the ministry itself was unable to accomplish anything.

He was ushered into the room where on several previous occasions he had answered questions, and found there the same men who had met him on the day of his arrival in London; but there was a different attitude this time, however, and the officials before him seemed anxious and ill at ease. Plainly they were ready for any suggestion he might offer, or any measure that might seem possible.

“Mr. Hillier,” the Lord of the Admiralty began, “in all the time you were in Washington did any rumors or stories or information reach you regarding some new form of submarine boat projected, or being experimented with, by the United States Government?”

At first, on impulse, he almost answered, “No”; but before his lips could formulate the monosyllable there suddenly returned to his memory several conversations he had had with Dr. Roberts on this subject, and also he recollected that in one of these talks Norma had participated. There was no reason so far as he could think why he should conceal this knowledge.

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"Yes," he replied, "I do know something of the subject, but nothing tangible or of value. That which recurs to me is a conversation I had a few months ago with a scientific inventor who is a friend of mine."

"And his name, pray?"

"Doctor William Roberts."

Every man in the room gave a start and looked at his neighbor. The mention of the name seemed to have affected them. The Prime Minister repeated it as an exclamation. "That is the man," he said, "who is supposed to have gone insane, but who at one time, according to our secret reports, was working on some electrical discovery which might be utilized for an improved submarine. What do you know of it?"

"I know only this," he said, "that Dr. Roberts told me he believed it perfectly feasible so to use electricity through metal as to change its structure and at the same time lessen the resistance, or skin friction, through the water of a boat so constructed."

"Were you at the time discussing submarines?"

"Yes, we were. The subject arose through his describing certain experiments in which he and his daughter were then engaged. His contention was that a submarine could never be made totally effective unless it gained a speed so far

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beyond anything known that it could traverse great distances and maneuver with such rapidity that it would be practically immune from attack."

This then must be the solution! and he read in the faces of his interrogators that they so accepted it. There was a chorus of questions which he could not answer. He admitted his lack of technical enlightenment, and also that he had no knowledge of what success had resulted from the experiments. Nothing of a valuable nature had been given to him at the time of that or any other conversation. But he had made it certain in the minds of his superiors that, though they might not know the secret of the submarines which had destroyed the Japanese fleet, they at least were aware what form of attack might be expected in case of war. In the nature of things it could afford no solace; but it might assist in obviating danger.

He listened to the discussion, and felt that he should be given leave to go, now that he had told all he knew; but he was again brought to the fore by a question.

"We understand you are personally on very pleasant and friendly terms with the President of the United States?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Do you believe that if you were in Washing-

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ton you could gain an audience with him through his friendship and deliver into his own hands a message from our Government? ”

“ Yes, if I was in Washington; but it now seems inaccessible.”

The Prime Minister, to whom the others looked, reached over and picked up a paper knife with which he idly tapped on the table where lay a map. “ Mr. Hillier,” he said, “ we are about to send you on a very important journey. We have selected you because of your thorough familiarity with the United States, your perfect knowledge of the Canadian border line, and your ability to talk personally to the President if he can be reached. We are not at war with the United States, and do not believe that vessels sent by us would be attacked unless war was declared. In the interests of the national dignity, however, we are compelled to make some kind of demonstration of strength off the American coast,—this for the reassurance of our own people in Canada, if for no other purpose. We are going to send our most powerful fleet into Canadian waters, where it will be stationed until this war is at an end. You recognize the danger? ”

Hillier sat thoughtfully for a moment and then said, “ Yes, I think I do. You are afraid that if a great fleet was sent toward Canada it might be misinterpreted by the United States as a warlike

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move against her; there might be accidents; and then our vessels would disappear as completely as did those of Japan."

"You are right," the minister assented, and his companions nodded in approval. "Now, under those circumstances it is necessary for us to get word through, without any chance of miscarriage whatever, fully and clearly explaining to the United States that this demonstration is for the reassurance of Canada; that it has no intention of interfering with American affairs; and requesting that measures be taken to prevent its being attacked under misapprehension. If that message did miscarry or was delayed in its delivery to one sufficiently high in authority, the results might be fatal."

"And you wish me to make an attempt to deliver these advices?"

"Yes, because we have tried through other agencies and failed. This time there must be no failure, because the North Sea fleet is now being mobilized to its full strength, including the Dreadnought and her two sister ships, and will sail within a week after your departure. Do you think you can pass the lines?"

Guy's heart gave a great bound of satisfaction. Now he would have all the aid his Government could give to penetrate the cordon and reach a place where he stood the best chance of finding

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Norma, or of learning where she was and what had happened to her and her father.

"No one can try harder, sir," he hastened to assert, "and I believe that if anyone can enter I can."

"When can you go?"

"As soon as you are ready."

"Then let it be to-night. One of our fastest dispatch boats, probably the Norfolk, will take you, and will land you wherever you deem it best to make the attempt. I suppose, however, you will endeavor to go through by way of Canada?"

He answered that such would be his intention, shook hands with them all, received his messages, and left the chambers, his blood tingling with the excitement of action, and elated because the call of duty was leading him back into the land where Norma lived and might be found.

In the chamber he left behind a group of men, who looked at each other and said, "He is the fourth man to try it; and is not only the best but our last hope."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LONE VOYAGER



SPECIAL train breaking records for speed swung shrieking into the archway of the Liverpool station, and Hillier, carrying nothing but light baggage, jumped out of his compartment, and walked along the Queen's Landing to the gangplank of the waiting Norfolk. Two men in sailor's uniform, who evidently had been posted for the purpose of keeping curious loungers away from the boat, halted him, and were joined almost on the instant by two officers in waiting. Hillier recognized one as a personal friend. They shook hands, boarded the ship, and almost before their feet were planted on the deck the landing stage was swung into the air and she proceeded to get under way.

It was plain to Hillier that no time was to be lost in this transatlantic journey; for before the Norfolk had passed out of the river she was working under forced draught. He found himself the only passenger, and that instructions had been given placing the destination of the ship under his

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orders. That the Government purposed to spare no expense or effort in assisting him to a successful conclusion of his mission was evident. He was tired of hearing of war, and felt a secret sense of satisfaction as day after day passed in respite from such news.

Out of the North Sea, sluggishly rolling in the swells and floundering through the waves, gathered a fleet almost as powerful as that which had been mobilized by Japan. Other nearby stations sent in their quota of cruisers, torpedo boat destroyers, and swift moving dispatch boats. Five of the world's greatest battleships formed the heart of this apparently invincible gathering, which was to cross the ocean to a land of mystery, always facing the possibility of destruction by a terrible and unknown engine of warfare.

The people of England were much divided in opinion as to the advisability of the Government's move when it became public. A strong conservative element feared the danger of Great Britain, being involved in the war through this action, while the Liberal partisans and jingoes asserted that it was the only method of upholding the country's dignity, demonstrating to America that England would do her best, and at the same time assuring Canada that the mother country intended to support her in case of attack along her border line. That Britannia still ruled the waves was gen-

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erally doubted; for if the Americans had in their possession means of so easily overcoming a fleet as important as that which Japan had lost, there was almost a certainty that she could conquer any adversary sent against her on the water. It was no longer a question of warfare on land; for all the transports in the world would be powerless against such submarines as the nations now conceded the United States must possess.

Before sailing, the fleet commanders had been called into a council and given positive instructions that they were not to permit themselves to be drawn into action in any event before reaching Canada. On their arrival they were at once to coöperate with the Dominion Government in whatever way seemed advisable at that time, and follow such orders as might be given from London.

The clearance, however, unlike the sailing of that fleet from Japan, was not accompanied by any gala demonstration. It was rather with dire misgivings that the public witnessed this departure, which were to a certain extent shared in by those aboard the vessels; and it was fully realized that the flower of England's navy might never return from its voyage into an unknown danger.

The conservative press lent a funereal attitude to the occasion in its treatment of the situation, one journal declaring that "England is sending to

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magnificent martyrdom men who had better have been retained at home for their country's good." Another paper characterized it as a "useless sacrifice." This became the general public opinion within a few days, as reports from Canada continued gloomy and showed no prospect of a rift within the clouds.

The music halls, always an index to the popular view, found their greatest hits in topical songs which were generally of the tenor that the great, grand, glorious, and gorgeous British tar had sailed away to do or die—with the accent on the "die." A general air of melancholy prevailed over all England, and as the days went on and the fleet itself got beyond reach of the wireless telegraph stations and far out on a deserted ocean, the sentiment was one of acute expectancy.

The Admiralty was advised of the arrival without incident of Hillier, and appraised of the fact that he had decided to make his attempt to cross into the forbidden land unaided. There was a certain sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that a good and efficient man was on the ground with at least a chance for success in his endeavors.

This beatific state of mind was dispelled one bright afternoon, and England thrown into a furore that scarcely could have been greater had one of the mysterious submarines appeared off its

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shores and begun bombarding the nearest city. It was like an intimation of disaster delivered in advance of more terrible news.

The black hull of a South American tramp steamer hove into sight beyond Fastnet, and instituted a rapid interchange of signals. The men on shore, as these advanced, looked at each other with blank dismay, and then, fearing that there had been a misunderstanding, and failing to grasp suddenly a significance so terrible in its import, requested that the signals be repeated. There could be no doubt of their correct interpretation. In one hour all England knew beyond cavil that her fleet had met the same fate as that which had overtaken Japan's. The message in brief was that the *Esperanta* had picked up in mid ocean, floating on a life raft torn from its moorings, a sailor wearing the uniform of the Dreadnought. The man was almost dead from exposure, and had not yet recovered sufficiently to give a coherent account of what had taken place.

No ship ever sailed into Southampton that attracted the attention given to the *Esperanta*. Trainload after trainload of excursionists, farmers within a day's drive, and pedestrians from near by swarmed to Southampton, forming an excited and almost uncontrollable gathering. Tug-boats hastened out to meet the incoming steamer, which carried the only living link between reality

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and the terrible unknown, and long lines of constables strove to hold back the excited crowd, the noise of whose mutterings filled the air with an ominous drone.

Between these ranks of blue clad men there came four surgeons, carrying on a stretcher a wreck of humanity who laughed insanely and rolled his head from side to side.

The crowd fell into an awed hush as the litter passed to the special train which was to convey this most important witness to a hospital. Next in public interest were the officers and men of the *Esperanta*, who, feeling themselves in the limelight, became each the center of great crowds, to whom they recounted as best they could the story of how the man was found.

The exact details of this as given by the Captain of the *Esperanta* to the ministers of the Cabinet who were summoned threw meager light upon the case. The *Esperanta* had gone out of her usual course, following the Gulf Stream to the northward, until warned by an American cruiser to take a more easterly tack. She had done so, thus bringing her into a less frequented path of travel.

At ten o'clock in the morning, five days previous to her reporting at Fastnet, the man on the lookout had sighted an object which drew his attention, which at first he believed to be a mere

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piece of untenanted wreckage tossing on the swell. He had notified the Captain, who altered the ship's course and bore down upon it, only to learn that it was a life raft on which was a man. A boat was lowered, and it was found that the inanimate form was that of a British sailor, on whose cap, which had been thrust beneath a cleat of the raft, were the words "H. M. S. Dreadnought." The man evidently had lashed himself securely before his strength had failed, knowing how small were his chances for rescue, and how certain his coming weakness. When picked up by the *Esperanta* he was thought to be dead; but being taken aboard he showed some signs of life, and after hours of work recovered sufficiently to give some slight hope of survival.

So terribly, however, had been his sufferings from privation that his mind seemed unhinged, and they had been unable to gather any information from him save that of some overwhelming disaster. He was now in the throes of brain fever, and talked only the speech of the delirious. His fragmentary mumblings were beyond all understanding; his mind seemed to be a confused jumble of hallucinations, in which he cried for water and made absurd comments on what was passing in his dreams. There were strangely interwoven babblings of submarine boats, sea serpents, and unheard of monsters which harried the ship and

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sent her to her doom. Pitiful exclamations of helplessness and fear, interjections of overwhelming dread, and brief snatches of prayer came from his lips throughout all the days in which they had attended him. The strangest part in all the incident of picking up the castaways was that the Captain of the *Esperanta*, seeking other survivors, had cruised for hours in the vicinity; but had found no other sign of wreckage or of humanity. He had coursed to the northward, thinking it possible that the trend of the wind had driven this lone mariner away from the scene of catastrophe; but the ocean itself was a blank. The crest of no wave carried even a piece of flotsam, nor was there anywhere a clew to the mystery.

The rocking of the foundations of the world could have created no more suspense or terror than did the fear of this unknown agent of destruction which threatened the downfall of Governments and the eradication of boundary lines. England suffered the woes of the bereaved in the certainty that thousands of men who were fathers, brothers, husbands, or friends had been annihilated by this terrible Republic across the sea. From every throat came a despairing cry for retaliation; but England, rich, mighty, and powerful, felt herself without means of appeasing it. It was well enough to talk of revenge when the means were at hand; but the country in the face of this

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dread enemy was helpless, and so it was that the bitterness of defeat gave way to the hopelessness of terror when a calmer and more judicial spirit prevailed. It was beginning to be comprehended to the full that not only Great Britain in all her strength, but the combined forces of the world, would stand no chance of conducting even a defensive war against the United States—now become a swordfish ravaging and depopulating the seas.

In the meantime, while all this consternation prevailed and the heads of nations, fearful and trembling, speculated as to the outcome, the sailor from the Dreadnought was being watched and cared for by the most distinguished savants and specialists of the Old World. There hovered over his bedside through every minute of the day men dispatched by every European Power, who were doing all that science might suggest to bring this lone and stricken mariner back to sanity and let him give tongue to what he knew of this scourge of the waters. Hourly bulletins of his condition were posted on street corners, and round these stood men and women in suspense. His least word was recorded as of monumental importance, in the hope that from some cranny of his wrecked mind might come some elucidating phrase, however slight. The most important thing that apparently could be relied upon was that whatever

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the form of attack had been, it was observed before the blow was struck. This was shown by his repeatedly exclaiming, "It's coming! It's coming! It'll get us, sure, and we can't fight back!"

And so the nations watched by the bedside of a common sailor. From Japan came long messages of condolence to her ally, which were received in a spirit of fellow suffering.

The peculiarities of the situation were in nowise lessened by reports from Canada, where the troops still massed along the border maintained a friendly spirit, committed no acts of encroachment, showed no apprehension of war, and seemed as ignorant of their own Government's plans or what it had done as were the Canadians themselves. Indeed, their mystification over the disappearance of the Japanese and British fleets was as complete as that of the most humble farmer on the Canadian frontier. Their officers, shocked by the terrific news, hastened to give statements to the effect that their instructions were to avoid giving offense, as the United States had no intention of engaging in war with Great Britain. Coupled with the loss of the fleet, these interviews seemed singularly inconsistent, it being impossible to reconcile annihilation on the sea and a cry for peace on land.

It was generally admitted in England that Can-

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ada was now in a helpless position and completely at the mercy of a well drilled and well equipped army along her borders, which was undoubtedly within constant reach of supplies and reënforcements. The futility of any attempt either to relieve or to aid her by sending more men across the Atlantic, now absolutely under the control of the Americans, was obvious. It began to appear to the British Government that the United States was deliberately planning to take the Dominion of Canada whenever she deemed the time opportune. That she could now do so at her own convenience was unquestioned.

An exasperating condition was the attitude of the Canadians themselves, who, as far as appearances went, were in a state of the utmost placidity. Indeed, the farmers along the border were prosperous and thriving through the increased demand for their supplies, which the American quartermasters purchased liberally, and for which they invariably paid American gold. It actually seemed as if an era of good feeling was being established across the boundary. The loss of the fleet threatened a rupture for a brief time; but the Province, now convinced of the hopelessness of taking an active side either way, showed an inclination to stand aloof and remain absolutely neutral. It was agreed between the officials of the Dominion and those of Great Britain that Canada could do noth-

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ing but endeavor as best she might to remain passive pending further developments.

This lack of partisanship proved anything but an assistance to Hillier in his attempt to break through the cordon, and it was this as much as anything else that hampered him in his mission.

CHAPTER IX

BARRED BY BAYONETS



ESTED by his sea voyage, and glowing with a determination to win his way across the border, but with no definite idea as to what method he should pursue, Guy Hillier landed in Montreal. His first effort was to gain what details he could as to the nature of the embargo which had been placed on travelers between the two countries, after which he lost no time in personally studying the habits of the border camps. Long residence in America had lessened the broadness of his A's, and with a little practice his R's were almost those of the average New Yorker.

The meager information he succeeded in gathering was not altogether trustworthy, as he was soon to learn. He had been told that certain Americans, in Canada at the time the line of blue was drawn, were permitted to pass, and thus regain their homes, and on this he based his first sally. There was no trouble whatever in gaining the encampments nor in interviewing the officers in command of that section of the defense. A smart

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appearing sentry passed him over to the guardianship of a soldier off duty, who conducted him to one of the regulation tents which dotted the hillside back of the line.

On the orderly's presenting his card, a voice from within hailed, "Come in!" and he entered the little house of canvas, to find three officers engaged in some game of cards which he did not understand.

"What can I do for you?" the commander inquired, rising from his camp stool and still holding the visitor's card in his hand.

"I am anxious to cross the line," Hillier replied.

The officer laughed and shook his head. "I'm sorry, sir, but we have had as high as a hundred applications of this nature in one day, and my orders forbid my acceding to any such request."

"But you pass Americans, do you not?"

Again the officer smiled tolerantly, replying with good nature, "Not under conditions like these. We have no choice in the matter. If you are an American, I thoroughly appreciate your anxiety to go home; but I cannot help you."

It began to look less easy. "Is there no way at all?" asked Hillier.

"My dear sir," the officer answered, "the prophet Moses leading his band across the Red

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Sea had an easier trip than you could make through our lines."

For a moment the courier lost patience, and then as a last resort he decided to make a clean breast of his errand. "Colonel," he said, "I am not an American; I am the secretary of the British Embassy in Washington—or was up to the time of this war. I come as a special messenger from my country, bearing important dispatches, which I am to deliver only into the hands of His Excellency, the President of the United States. The accomplishment of my mission may have a grave bearing on this conflict, and it possibly may prevent bloodshed."

The Colonel turned to one side and threw down the playing cards which he had been holding before making any reply. His companions looked highly interested; but their faces gave no hope.

"Mr. Hillier, there have been at least twenty men before me with similar important messages, many of whom have come direct from other foreign Powers. The first of these I took from them and sent forward by special couriers of my own. In each case I was given a reprimand. Come here," he said, and preceded Hillier out into the open, where a bulletin board was nailed against a tree. In the very center of a collection of orders pasted thereon was one which read:

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GENERAL ORDER No. 27,007:

Order No. 16,004, which was delivered to all officers, bulletined, and read to all men, permits of no modification whatever. It reads, NO MAN SHALL PASS THROUGH THE LINES, EITHER IN OR OUT, AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHALL ANY COMMUNICATION BE PASSED, EITHER IN OR OUT, SAVE ON THE WRITTEN PERMIT DULY SEALED AND SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

"Is that emphatic enough?" he asked, turning to Hillier, who reluctantly admitted that it allowed of no misinterpretation.

"But," said the latter half jokingly, "suppose I make a run for it?"

"In that case, Mr. Hillier," the officer answered gravely, "my men would unhesitatingly drill you full of holes, and I should be sorry to see a man whom I take to be a gentleman make such an attempt. This may look like play; but underneath gloved hands along this border are the claws of war. Don't, please, make me unsheath them!"

The secretary, baffled, declined the proffer of a drink, and was promptly escorted back across the Canadian lines; but on the way he made new plans. He was only rebuffed by his first failure, and with

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doggedness he set his jaws and swore that by some means or other he would go to Washington. Time was becoming more and more valuable, so much of it had been expended in his first inquiries and overtures. He would now be driven to stealth and disguise.

He returned to the city, bought a shabby suit of clothes from a second hand dealer, checked his luggage in the hotel, put the precious dispatches in a pocket within his shirt, and called for an automobile. The machine carried him rapidly down a well rolled road till night fell, when he paid the chauffeur, and as an additional precaution for the sake of secrecy walked ahead till satisfied that he had put many miles between himself and anyone who might have observed his coming.

He had seen enough during the day to be convinced that under ordinary circumstances it would be impossible to pass the sentries, whose beats were exceptionally short, and who formed almost a continuous line as far as he had been able to observe. His inquiries had elicited the information that somewhere in the vicinity a small river flowed between the two countries, and he purposed using this tributary of the St. Lawrence as a means to gain the other country. His plan was rendered more tenable because the moon, being in the full, favored him. The night itself seemed most propitious, as from the west a dark bank of

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clouds was slowly coming forward, promising to lend obscurity at a time when it should be most needed.

Cautiously he proceeded along the river bank, gaining a position in as close proximity to the moving sentries as he dared, then slipped off his clothing, secured it into a bundle, and awaited the moment of darkness.

At the very instant when the edge of the cloud began creeping across the moon he lowered himself quietly into the water and began swimming toward the boundary line. In his days at Oxford he had been an athlete of note, and in all his later years had maintained excellent physical condition, and was thoroughly at home in the water. He swam with a low stroke, catching breath from the corner of his mouth as he turned his face sidewise, and exposing as little of himself to view as possible. The bundle of clothing lashed to his shoulders proved something of an impediment, but not sufficient to stay his progress. The current caught him now and then, throwing him out of his course, and when he discovered this to be the case he was almost against a bank. Thereafter he lifted his head at intervals, in order that he might remain in the center of the stream. He surmised that he was nearing the line of sentries, and elevated his chin for another glance, when a sudden blinding flash of light smote him in the

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eyes, causing him instinctively to duck his head. When he came up for air after swimming for some distance under water, the light was still on him, and a drawling voice hailed him from the shore.

"Stranger, when you get tired of swimming you might come in. I guess you'd better, because there's four or five men up beyond me might take you for a duck, and they're all pot hunters."

His chance was lost. He wondered why he had not thought of searchlights, and realized that nothing but the brilliance of the night had prevented their employment at an earlier hour. Fairly gritting his teeth in anger, he swam to the point where the soldier stood, and crawled out upon the beach, seating himself until he could fully recover from his effort and regain his breath. A tall, lean man, whose color emblems showed him to be from Missouri, stood above him, while farther back and at a higher point the buzzing of the calciums and the long restless ray of light showed the location of this searcher of the night. Beneath it he could dimly discern the tower like structure on which it was mounted.

"You'd better get your clothes on," suggested the sentry; "or, if you want to, I'll call one of the other boys and get him to lend you a few dry duds. Sorry we couldn't have used the lights a little sooner and saved you the trouble of swimming up this far and gettin' all wet; but the boss is a little

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shy on carbons now, so he thought he'd make the moon work for an hour or two this evening."

Hillier, discomfited, started to don his wet clothing; but the guard insisted in homely phrase that he'd be a heap sight better off and run no risk of catching his death of cold if he would just let one of the boys loan him some clothes for a little while, and to this he finally assented. This infinite politeness and good humor, coating inflexibility, was a little trying.

"You seem to keep a pretty good watch along this border," he growled.

"Yes, fair to middlin'," the sentry said, with a chuckle. "We've been expecting you all day long. In fact, I suppose you're being expected from here clear through to Vancouver. You're the Englishman that's hankering to go to Washington."

Hillier turned toward him in amazement. What perfection of espionage was this? "For Heaven's sake, man!" he asked his captor in surprise, "how do you do it?"

"Watch that streak of light for a minute," the sentry answered, and as it leveled its ray along the line he saw here and there field booths with double lines of wire entering and emerging from them. "One's telegraph and telephone, and the other's this freak thing that shows men's photographs. Yes," he concluded, "your picture taken

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in five different positions has been in there since you first tried to cross the line to-day, and anyway if you'd got past us fellows, you'd have been picked up before you got very far into the interior."

Hillier sat stupefied. "Has anybody ever really got across this line?"

"Yes, three or four of them, here and there, mostly out West where the hills is rougher; but they all got gathered in sooner or later. One of 'em who tried it was a Jap, and the boys accidentally shot him. Another fellow was an Englishman, who made it over from Canada into Detroit, so I've heard."

"What happened to him?" Hillier asked, suspecting that this was the first bearer of the message who had preceded him.

"They didn't want to turn him loose, because he knew too much; so they decided he was a vag, and run him in till the war is over."

Hillier knew now what had been his predecessor's fate, but made no reply.

His informant after a pause continued, "There's been only one accident besides that which happened to the Jap, and that was a poor devil that undertook to go over in one of these newfangled airships. He certainly got his tire punctured all right, and came down mighty sudden." The soldier stopped for a moment and heaved a long sigh,

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and then concluded in a softer voice, "I was awfully sorry for that fellow. He wa'n't no spy nor nothing like that, but just a young newspaper chap doing the best he knew how to get the goods. He was done for when the boys picked him up. The Colonel felt about as sorry as anybody else, and got special permission from the Canadian Government to send a squad back with him as a guard of honor."

By this time Hillier had donned the dry garments that had been provided, and stood awaiting the further instructions of his captor. "Well, what am I to do?" he inquired, seeing that the man stood motionless.

"Oh, you can go back across the line, or if you want to one of the boys will find a place for you to bunk till morning. You see, you're kind of a distinguished guest. We all had orders to treat you nicely, and the Colonel will have a machine here to take you back wherever you want to go to-morrow."

Baffled by vigilance and overcome by courtesy, the secretary, after bidding his captor good by, retired for the night to a camp cot in the quarters of a Lieutenant of infantry. It was long before he succumbed to a sleep of utter exhaustion. He was awakened by a bugle call in the morning, and found his host shaving himself before a small mirror suspended from the tent pole.

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"Good morning, Mr. Hillier," the officer said. "Not quite as pleasant quarters as the secretary of the British Embassy is entitled to, and not many conveniences; but you're welcome to my razor if you'll wait a minute."

Hillier sat up, rubbing his eyes. Neatly stretched out on a camp stool before him were his shabby clothes, improved by washing, not only dry but pressed. He stared at them in surprise, while the officer laughingly continued:

"Yes, we did the best we could for them; but I don't think you made a friend of my orderly, as he swears he has worked on them all night long, and had requested a day's leave on the strength of it."

Thanking the officer for his hospitality, Hillier slowly garbed himself and stepped through the tent fly. Below him and stretching away as far as the eye could discern were gray brown embankments, one line within the other, and excavated with military precision.

"Intrenchments," came a voice behind him, observing his curious inspection. "We have to keep the boys busy, and besides the Government didn't want to take any chances. Those pits stretch across this continent now, and there won't be any trouble for a good many years to come for people to tell just where the border line is located. Like 'em?" he concluded whimsically.

"No, I can't say that I do," Hillier responded

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with equal good nature; "but they look business like."

"Oh, they're the goods sure enough," his informant continued; "but that isn't all. See that little mound over there?" and he pointed a bare brown arm over his guest's shoulder. Hillier nodded assent and looked inquiringly at his companion. "Behind that there's a brace of Gatling guns. Got them too every little ways. Never had to fire 'em yet, and hope we never will. But you never can tell. Same work's been done along the Mexican border line; but it's easier to guard. This war certainly has educated a lot of fellows; so that when it's over there'll be plenty of men can show callouses that were never decorated with 'em before. This country's bottled up now as tight as if the Lord Almighty had set a can over it," and he laughed at his own joke.

The motor car was placed at Hillier's disposal as promised, and before night fell he found himself back in his room at the hotel, no worse and no better for his experience. For ten days thereafter he made useless attempts to forward his message by every means that his ingenuity could suggest. Once he allowed it out of his hands, intrusting it through extremity to the care of a fisherman, and on the following day, with seals unbroken, it was returned to him by a polite officer of the United States army in civilian dress. Were it not for the

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gravity of his task, he would have come to regard it as a joke, a boy's game of prisoner's base or tag, in which he was always "it."

And then, as if to reproach him for his failure, there came from the clearness of the sky a swift and terrible thunderbolt. It was a message from England reporting the disappearance of that immense fleet which was to follow on his heels, and depended upon the delivery of his message for its immunity from attack. He had taken too long!

Stunned by this overwhelming disaster, shuddering in each nerve, and with every fiber of his body quivering, he sought the seclusion of his room, threw himself upon his bed, and buried his face in the pillows. Repeatedly there ran through his mind the self reproach that had it not been for his failure this shocking toll of war might never have been collected. An armada of greater strength than that which had fought off Cape Trafalgar had sailed gallantly out to its doom, trusting to him to avert disaster, and he in this hour of stress, when the fate of nations hinged upon his resource, had proved inefficient! Over and over he reviewed the struggle he had made to accomplish his mission, but found even in this stern self criticism no flaw of endeavor. But in his hour of bitterness he thought that God might have been more kind.

CHAPTER X

AN EMPEROR DISAPPEARS



UCH was the effect of the strange happenings of May and June that the poise of all Europe seemed trembling and unstable. Men who in all their lives had respected law and society began to question the value of communal authority, when even the most carefully reared power proved unable to protect itself against what appeared to be only one invention. Taxation had created government, which in turn had devised armies and navies and expended more and more money in their equipment. It had now been demonstrated that the discovery of some one new force, some one engine of destruction more powerful than any other known, could destroy the values of navies and armies in a day. And yet in this frame of mind, where anarchy seemed less terrible and Governments at best but weak organizations, the greed for aggrandizement and conquest reasserted itself.

In Russia the revolutionists took heart, and hoped to possess the land. In the Balkans, reek-

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ing with the blood of past strife, new forces were forming for independence. Rulers of neighboring Powers studied the map of Turkey, dreaming of what portion might be seized. China, rehabilitated for aggression by Japan herself, regretted a compact with the smaller country which prevented its seizure, now that it was so terribly weakened.

But the most threatening attitude of all was that of Germany toward Great Britain. The Hohenzollerns, a line of warriors, still held the ancient throne, and the Kaiser was ambitious for his country's advancement. An astute ruler of exceptional capacity, he already had advanced Germany's flag of trade beyond all seas, and by this means alone practically dominated all of South America. In all earlier days of this trade conquest the United States had been busied in her home enterprises, saying to herself that when she chose she could find a way to take the traffic of the southern continent with ease. With her eyes swaddled in silly egotism, she had waited till too late, and then, when her bandages were removed, suddenly learned that commercial brains were not confined to America alone. The sleeping giant had lost commercial supremacy in a continent which was hers by right of location and needs, to a race of industrious workers across the sea.

Nor had Germany neglected her fight for trade

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at home. There too she found egotists, so swollen with self sufficiency that by disastrous tariff methods they had been bested. England, failing to protect its producers, had driven her own farmers and carriers from the field, until, as one disgruntled farmer said, "You can't pick up a cabbage in a stall which don't bear the words 'made in Germany';" and if a new crown was needed for the King, Germany would have stood a fair chance of booking the order. In a natural revulsion which had reached fever heat before the Japanese American war broke out, England was trying to obstruct this encroachment. The feeling thus engendered between the two nations culminated in one of envy on the part of Great Britain and one of hatred on the part of Germany. The Kaiser, calmly reviewing times and conditions, decided that the time had come to strike.

England, with power sadly diminished through the loss of her great fleet, and at the mercy of the United States in her richest colony, stood open to attack. While she was still mourning defeat, Germany took exception to the tariff laws in a very carefully worded message. It was one that under normal circumstances would have provoked demands for apologies, or, in a refusal of such, almost instant war. But now the lion was driven to temporize. That the Kaiser hoped for an open rupture and intended to leave no stone unturned for

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such an outcome, was demonstrated by his sending more curtly worded notes.

The English press retailed these to the public, and accused the Kaiser of deliberately plotting war with a foreign country to offset the spread of Socialism which threatened him at home, hoping by combat abroad to reunite his own people.

The Kaiser demanded an apology from the British press; but Englishmen were not accustomed to bending the knee, even though the lack of flexibility might cause the loss of life. Lacking nothing in bravery, they reluctantly faced a crisis rather than brook humiliating domination. Their answer therefore was bellicose.

Germany at once began an ominous assembling of her fleets in strategic waters, from which on a moment's notice they might sail forth. France stood diplomatically aloof, hoping perhaps that when the world had wearied of fighting she might be in a position to gain by plunging into the fray. Alsace Lorraine was still mourned, and her monument in the Place de la Concorde draped.

Then, at the very moment when it seemed that England would be compelled to beat back an invading army from her shores, there came an unexpected lull. The British press had been predicting a declaration of war within twenty-four hours, when the change took place. At the first day's delay the well informed wondered, and when

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two days had passed, and finally three, it became certain that some very unusual event had taken place in Berlin.

Rumors began to creep to London, to Paris, and soon the whole world knew, despite Germany's attempts to keep the matter a secret, that on the very eve of a crisis the Kaiser, the most dominant figure in Europe, had disappeared. Nor was that all.

As if to emphasize the fact that it could have been through no mental aberration that he had gone, the Chancellor of Germany had disappeared at the same time. That something inexplicable had taken place was known within a few hours after the Kaiser and Chancellor were last seen. On the night of their disappearance they had been closeted together with the most trusted military adviser of the Empire. This latter officer, fatigued by duties which had tried him beyond his years, had left the consultation at midnight. In the room where it was held there was a telephone used only by certain privileged ones who, by means of a stated signal to the switchboard operator, could gain communication. Who these were none but the Kaiser knew.

This operator told the secret service men of the Empire that a few minutes past midnight he had answered a call and received the password which caused him to make the desired connection with

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the Emperor's telephone, and a conversation of some minutes ensued, which, owing to the arrangement of the instruments, he was unable to hear.

The guards of the palace were called to the council room and instructed by the Kaiser in person to admit a man who would present a plain card within a few minutes. They reported that a carriage drove up to the outer gates and a gentlemanly appearing stranger who spoke perfect German handed out a slip of pasteboard on which nothing whatever was printed or engraved. Fearing, despite their master's instructions, that the man might be an anarchist, the guards had hesitated, whereupon the visitor, reading their suspicions, told them that they might search him if they wished, which they did. This was carried out with even more than customary care, and the man was found to have absolutely nothing in his pockets. He was dressed in the regulation dinner suit, as if he had lately come from some club.

Still suspecting something unusual in such a singular visit and admission at this hour of the morning, the guards escorted him to the council room and waited at attention in the doorway when his presence was announced. To their surprise the Emperor smiled as if in recognition, bade his visitor "Good evening" in English, and dismissed the soldiers. Reassured by this action, the men

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had resumed their accustomed posts, thinking no more of the matter, and regarding it simply as one of the unusual appointments which are made in such troublous times.

In less than an hour, during all of which time the guard at the door had heard voices in seeming conversation participated in by the three persons within the room, he heard the Emperor and the Chancellor burst into most unusual and hearty laughter. A few minutes later he was surprised when the Emperor came from the room and went to his dressing chamber, from which he emerged in the plainest of civilian clothing, after which he beckoned to his two companions.

His Imperial Majesty cautioned the guard to let no one know that he was leaving, or of the nocturnal visitor, and, still accompanied by the unknown man and the Chancellor, passed from the palace. From this on he was traced to the very carriage door, which was closed behind the party by another attendant. The vehicle drove away in the night, the glow of the men's cigars being the last thing noticed by the man who escorted them, thus showing that all were on very friendly and intimate terms.

The conveyance itself was traced for several miles into the country, through the fact of its having passed several other rigs. There was nothing in its appearance to distinguish it from any other,

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and only the fact that the streets at that time of night were almost deserted enabled the officers to gather any idea of its direction. Others had been observed; but all were identified and accounted for, and it was by a process of elimination only that the one carrying the Kaiser and his companions was tracked. The return journey of the vehicle, if such there had been, was not noticed, and therefore led to the theory that somewhere within the Empire the Kaiser and Chancellor were being held prisoners.

The puzzling feature of the occurrence was that the Emperor must have been acquainted and even on terms of friendliness with the man who decoyed him away. No anarchistic attempt could be deduced from the situation, because with the careful search that had been made it was certain that there could have been no assassination unless a most remarkable concealment had been made of all evidences of the crime. Nor was it even tenable that the party had crossed the border line, because in a condition of threatened war all travelers were being closely watched.

Over every foot of the Empire and into the most inaccessible portions, search was being made for the place where the nation's ruler and the Chancellor might be held; but so far there had been nothing whatever that threw even the faintest ray of light on their whereabouts. The at-

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tempts of the secret service men and members of His Majesty's family to keep his disappearance a secret failed, and indeed was unnecessary, for the people themselves had to be enlisted in a quest involving the whole country.

It was at this juncture that a Romany horse trader, scenting a reward, offered his services and a suggestion to the police which was promptly acted upon. He described having met the carriage which was supposed to have taken away the Emperor, and, following the instincts of the horseman, he scrutinized the animals more closely than the conveyance. He said he was walking round a turn in the road, and was almost run over before he had time to gain a free way. One of the horses almost brushed him in passing, and he noticed not only a singularity of gait but a peculiar white mark on the animal's flank.

The secret service men had already become convinced that the team belonged within the city, and so, as a forlorn hope rather than in the belief that any clew would be gained, they employed the Gypsy, giving him license to adopt whatever means seemed the most likely to discover and identify the horse. With Romany cunning, he immediately secured a seat facing one of the most fashionable parkway drives, where he remained for hour after hour, apparently occupied in smoking a short black pipe, and presenting no marked dif-

ference in appearance from that of a hundred other loungers.

It was on the second day of the trader's watch that he jumped to his feet and excitedly ran after a passing turnout, until he could attract the attention of a mounted officer, who had been posted on the driveway for the purpose of assisting him in case his quest should develop anything worth following. The man pointed to the carriage ahead, and in broken German asserted his conviction that it was the one which had been used in the abduction. The officer, after giving him hasty instructions to report to headquarters, galloped down the boulevard in pursuit.

Much excitement was caused by the Gypsy's story, and a group of the most prominent officials awaited the return of the mounted officer. One hour passed, and still another, before he appeared, and suspense by this time was at high pitch. They began to look at the horse trader with considerable suspicion, fearing a canard, and were almost on the point of sending others to search for the missing officer, when the latter appeared, clinking his spurs across the tiled floor of the entryway. He looked sheepishly about him before saying anything, and then addressing the Captain, said, "This man is either mistaken, or else the affair promises to be more serious than we at first believed."

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“Well,” said his superior questioningly, “what about the carriage?”

The officer leaned over and spoke in a confidential tone. “The carriage was that of the American Ambassador!”

The Captain started back as if paralyzed. He imparted the news in an undertone to his comrades in the room, and the excitement grew. They dared go no further in this quest without consulting those of higher authority, and gathered into a private chamber, taking the Romany with them, where they waited till they were joined by the supreme head of the secret service department. This latter, in person, questioned both the Gypsy and the officer who had followed the carriage. All that could be elicited from the horse trader was that he had been accustomed to observe animals closely all his life, was positive that he could not be mistaken, and finally, in a fit of sullen wrath, he swore that he would stake his life on this having been the animal which passed him on the night of the Kaiser’s disappearance. He even went further and asserted that the harness of the horses was the same which he had seen on that occasion.

The mounted officer was equally certain that the turnout was that belonging to the Embassy, because he had observed it before, and knew the Ambassador by sight, and this was the reason why he had made no arrest. He said that he had been

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prepared to do so when he overtook the team; but, identifying the occupant, decided to run no risk of detaining so important a personage, and contented himself with following the carriage throughout its journey and till it was housed. He then dismounted, and by a pretext engaged one of the stablemen in conversation, learning thereby that the Ambassador had no horses other than these two. He had not deemed it advisable to make any further inquiries, for fear of arousing suspicion.

The head of the secret service department saw that he was facing a very grave responsibility. He sent messages calling together the most important men in the Government, and within an hour the findings were laid before them. They found themselves in a singularly embarrassing predicament. To take any action which might offend the representative of a nation which was already engaged in triumphant war, and of which the whole world stood in terror and apprehension, was something to be avoided. Even to suggest to the Ambassador of the United States that he was suspected of having abducted the Kaiser, an act of lese majesty in itself, was something which might arouse that man to appeal to his home Government, and topple Germany itself into an imbroglio which could end only in defeat. The attitude of America, up to the moment when communication ceased,

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had been friendly. Therefore, there seemed no logical reason for her taking any such unheard of action as that of interference with the person of His Majesty. The concensus of opinion was that the situation was too delicate to admit of any ordinary methods, and that there was only one thing to do—keep the Embassy under constant surveillance until by secret service methods they might learn what if any connection the Ambassador or those about him had with the disappearance.

The Gypsy received the promised reward, and from that hour on the American Embassy was unceasingly watched day and night from without and within.

CHAPTER XI

A KING IS LOST



EARIED by hours of suspense, days of anxiety, and nights of alarm, the King of England sought relaxation. A period of disaster had reached its culmination where nothing much worse might be predicted. Germany had other occupations than those of aggression, and was now distraught in its effort to find the missing ruler, from whom no word had been received and of whom no information had been obtained. The American dread had been somnolent for days, and the first grief for the loss of the great British fleet had lost its poignancy and was becoming only a bitter recollection to be calmly discussed and speculated upon. After weeks of storm and stress there had come a lull in which England waited for winds more kind.

London had lived so long in misery that it had become callous, hardened, and enveloped in an air of gloom, conditions resembling those of that period of terror which overspread it in the great plague, but which led men by work and pretense of gayety to seek forgetfulness. Once more the

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music halls opened, the theaters made their announcements, signs appeared on the boardings, and old habits began in a sort of half hearted way to resume their sway.

In this epoch of abnormality the atmosphere joined and sent upon the huge city a June fog, which settled down in the night, adding its blackness to that of the hour. And through it in quest of relaxation rode England's King. On leaving the palace he had no definite plan or destination; but the glare of the theaters lured and beckoned insistently to their wealth of light and entertainment, and he yielded.

His coming was unheralded, and attention was attracted to the presence only when the manager, following time established custom, which forbade the turning of one's back upon a King, preceded him with steady bows to the royal box and took his place beside the equerry while the visitor entered. The Hippodrome was to be honored. Within the box the royal guest seated himself behind the partially drawn curtains, where he could look out upon the bizarre performance and feel himself near a throng of persons. There was some satisfaction at least in mere proximity to companionship.

With languid interest and half absorption he glanced over the programme, paying but small attention to what it contained. A herd of performing elephants galloped clumsily round in the ring

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below, obeying the shrill, nervous shouts of a woman clad in red tights, and then sedately marched out through an aperture by the side of the stage when the act was ended. A man clad in an ill fitting dress suit, evidently the heritage from some predecessor, came to the front of the stage and began an ornate, rambling, and ungrammatical speech, announcing some wonderful exhibition which was about to take place. The monarch, suddenly aware of the voice, caught only the last words declaring it to be the "great event of the evening," and leaned back in his cushioned chair, his mind again reverting to the vicissitudes of government.

His reverie was disturbed by a conversation taking place at the door of his box. "The gentleman was very insistent that it should be delivered at once, otherwise I should not have brought it," he heard the manager of the theater say apologetically.

"Is there no place in the world where I can remain undisturbed?" the King muttered wearily, and then called aloud, "Send that note in, whatever it may be."

With a salute his equerry handed him the message, which he idly held in his hand for a few moments before opening it, looking half abstractedly out of his box to where a man was being hoisted aloft and through an opening in the arched roof

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above. More or less indifferently he tore open the envelope and withdrew a card, at which he stared with a puzzled frown, as if doubting his senses. Surely this could be no jest. Upon it was scrawled:

“Admiral Robert Bevins of the United States navy desires a brief audience with His Majesty upon matters which can be discussed in person only. If permissible, may he enjoy the seclusion of His Majesty’s box?”

Through the King’s mind passed a succession of questions. What could this mean? Would anyone dare perpetrate a joke of this character, and if so who would have the temerity? Was it not an absurdity that Admiral Bevins should be here this night in a London theater, when his country was at war and had practically thrown the gauntlet into the lists of the civilized world? It was impossible! But he would send for this individual who by his paltry ruse would infringe upon the privacy of a King, and see for himself what sort of fool he was.

“Show him in!” he said to the equerry, and then expectantly watched the door, wondering whether he was to face an adventurer or an imbecile. Between the King and the officer whose name appeared on the card was an intimacy of more than thirty years’ standing. The name alone

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had sufficient weight to preclude the curt refusal of such an extraordinary request. If this was the friend of his younger days, nothing but an errand of the utmost importance could have induced him to seek an audience under such circumstances, and, on the contrary, if his visitor proved to be a nonentity or crank, the guard would give protection and summary punishment.

The door of the cabinet slid back, and a grim, scarred, weather beaten man stood surrounded by the royal body guard. In utter astonishment that it should be the Admiral standing before him, the sovereign rose from his seat and took a step forward.

They stood for a moment, the King and the Admiral, and then slowly grasped each other's hand, casting the restraint of situation and the difference of position completely aside.

"Bevins," the monarch said, "for God's sake what brings you here in a time like this? Is there no limit to your daring, and nothing at which your country does not hesitate? Do you come as a friend or as an American?"

"Both," answered the officer, standing squarely on his feet and looking steadily into the gray eyes, which persistently scrutinized him as if seeking to read the cause of his visit.

There came another instant's pause, and the King with a gesture invited him to be seated.

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The guard discreetly withdrew and closed the door of the cabinet.

Bevins continued: "I must apologize for intruding upon you; but I have journeyed a long way to deliver a message which permits of no delay."

"In an official capacity then?" queried the monarch dryly.

"Yes, official and friendly. I was chosen for this mission not only because of our known friendship, but for the reason that I could explain certain events to you better than any man living."

The King nearly forgot the distrust which he had felt first, and almost yielded to the impulse to drop all ceremony and ask his guest for an explanation then and there. He half rose and grasped the arms of his chair. His lips opened to interrogate, and then, his life's training and restraint resuming their hold, his tongue gave a dry click, and he again assumed a posture of repose. It was difficult to assume an air of complacence when every instinct of King and man called out to him to ask impetuously the one before him for the unraveling of the skein of events and the story of the fate of the British fleet. He veiled his curiosity, his emotion, and his excitement behind a mask of polite reserve.

But what was coming next? His visitor who had hesitated, now went on. "This is no time nor place for me to say what I have to; but as an emis-

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sary of my Government I am asked to induce you, your Prime Minister, and the first Lord of the Admiralty to grant me a private audience."

The King, impatient, curious, and anxious, was yet relieved by what he heard. There was nothing very unusual in a request for a private audience under such circumstances, and he had hope that from it would come elucidation of all which he most wished to know. The morrow then would at least bring some ease of mind and some relief from uncertainty. Before he could reply the voice resumed:

"The audience must be granted to-night."

"To-night, to-night!" The sovereign forgot his aplomb, leaned his body toward his companion, and thrust his chin forward. There had been something in the use of the word "must" and the astonishing declaration that the interview should be conceded at once that aroused a little spark of resentment. And yet he was filled with a curiosity akin to anger.

The Admiral was quick to read his royal host's annoyance, and hastened to conciliate. "Your Majesty, as your friend I ask you not to misconstrue anything I may say. I am asking as a favor that I be allowed my own time and way,—yes, that I even may be permitted to suggest the conditions of the meeting. Believe me, it is for the best."

The King was motionless and speechless for

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what seemed a long time. From his viewpoint of head of a nation and bound to maintain its dignity, and a man with a man's anxieties and anxious to learn from a friend's lips the story of the last month's secrets and disasters, he was considering what was best to do.

In an oddly repressed tone he answered with another tentative question. "As a friend I received you in my box, and now on this same basis I ask you if this communication of yours is so important and urgent that it cannot take its due course according to official custom."

"Beyond official ways, Your Majesty, imperative and urgent," was the response; "otherwise I should not have chosen this unusual method of approaching you, nor asked for such an unusual audience in such haste and at such an unseemly hour."

To summon a King, a Prime Minister, and the highest official of the earth's most mighty navy to a private interview at midnight! Even in times like these it seemed preposterously impudent; but this man came as a friend from the land of silent terror which threatened to conquer the world, was undoubtedly in deadly earnest, and was a means of information between what had actually happened and what was to come.

"'Time will not wait, even for Kings,'" quoted the monarch with some undershade of bitterness, and from his guest came the whispered return:

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“No, time cannot wait, even for Kings.”

The monarch slowly settled back into the hallowed depths of his chair and, as if seeking a moment's respite to review the situation, looked upward at the hangings of his box and then out toward the garish lights of the stage. The hush of expectancy over the house had reached a climax of intensity, and the master of ceremonies in a raucous voice was shouting toward the roof in deliberately prolonged tones, “Are—you—all—ready?” From somewhere above them came a faint response, “Yes”; and then with speed gathered by its long flight through the air there came flashing comet like from high above an extended splotch of white, the sound of a sharp splash, and a burst of applause as the “event of the evening,” a high dive, was consummated. Neither occupant of the royal box paid any attention to this feat. Bevins remained in an attitude of expectancy, waiting for the King's next words. The success or failure of his enterprise might depend upon them, and in this light they seemed of almost tragic consequence.

“What do you propose?” the ruler asked, again facing the Admiral as though there had been no lapse of time; and the other, relieved by this sign of assent, gave an involuntary and deep drawn sigh of relaxation.

“If Your Majesty will be so kind, I think it best

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that I should meet you in the palace within an hour after your departure from this theater. That will give leeway for the other gentlemen to respond to the summons and be there at the appointed time."

The band struck up "God Save the King," in token of the closing of the performance, and from where they were they could see the audience standing, in total ignorance of the presence of His Majesty and unaware of the fact that a momentous interview, involving life and death, peace and war, and the welfare of empire was being conducted in a tiny overhanging box above them, while a leering mask of tragedy stared hollow eyed from the stage as if in mockery. The King and the Admiral were both on their feet, the one looking absent minded through an aperture, his mind concentrated on the decision he must make, and the other watching and waiting with breathless suspense. Below the throng began a steady movement toward the exits, constantly dissipating itself, and the house was almost emptied before the officer had his reply.

"Very well, you may come, and I shall have the others sent for at once."

Bevins gave a quick start of exultation; but his companion continued without a pause:

"I shall be there within half an hour, and shall

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instruct the guard at the outer gate to admit you immediately on your arrival."

His companion held up a hand as if forgetting something. "If Your Majesty pleases, I should prefer that you instruct the guard at the private entrance leading from the garden in the rear."

To this also the King acceded, attributing it to a desire for concealment on the part of his companion; who almost at once made his adieu, passed out beyond the curtains, through the door, and joined the last of the lagging crowd. The fog had not abated, but seemed even more impenetrable than in the earlier hours of the evening and rendered traffic more difficult. Here and there came the glow and halation of an arc light, dimly showing through a veil and lighting up a tiny radius in the gloom. A constable kept calling, "Keep close to the wall! Keep close to the wall!" his voice sounding from a long distance and muffled. Cabmen were insistently shouting, and when Bevins came to the first street crossing he was almost run down by a slow moving automobile whose eyes stared at him suddenly like those of a great beetle. It was the King driving to his residence.

At Buckingham Palace, where the royal banner was hanging sodden from its staff, the guards, with busbys coated with the perspiration of the night, tramped briskly to and fro at the great iron

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gates in front as well as past the gates of the garden on Buckingham road, a half mile in the rear. The time of the appointment was past when the guard at the private entrance received the expected visitor with a comment of surprise and apology that he had not been accompanied through the gardens by the farther sentries.

"Very thoughtless and unusual, sir," he said, "and I'll report them at once."

"No, no, don't do that," Bevins hastily requested. "I wished to come alone. By His Majesty's permission," he added, and the man conducted him to the private audience chamber, where he was given a seat.

The Prime Minister entered only a few minutes later, and stared hard at Bevins, evidently trying to recall whether or not they had met before, and seeming to remember something familiar in the face. They waited without speaking until the Lord of the Admiralty appeared, showing from his garb that he had been compelled to hasten his coming; and then came the King.

"Gentlemen," he said, turning to the others, "this is Admiral Robert Bevins of the United States navy."

Had he said, "Gentlemen, here is an assassin with a pocketful of bombs," the effect on the members of his Cabinet could have been hardly less marked. Bevins bowed and extended his hand to

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each in turn, assuring them of his friendliness. The King himself without parley conducted them to a more private room, and offered each in turn a cigar, after which he looked inquiringly at his guest, who answered by drawing from his pocket a sealed dispatch, which he delivered. It was torn open and read in silence, passing from hand to hand, after which the Admiral, without prelude, plunged into his subject.

“As will be witnessed by the dispatches I have brought, the United States wishes nothing more than complete harmony. It has been compelled for the sake of peace to adopt rather unprecedented methods, which I can assure you will at least revolutionize all methods of warfare as generally understood. The letter is to reassure His Majesty.”

The two members of the ministry looked at each other in strained suspense, and eagerly waited for the American to continue, which he did after brief thought, in which time he gravely studied the King's face.

“It has not been pleasant for my country to take the steps it has; but there were no other means of establishing and maintaining—perhaps forever—a continued state of peace. Gentlemen, I believe that the day of war has nearly seen its sunset. I believe if you will intrust yourselves to my care for the next few hours, under my assur-

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ance as a representative of my Government and as a friend of His Majesty's, that no harm will come to any of you, that I can convince you of what I have said, as well as of the uselessness of strife."

Again there was silence, while those in the room looked at each other questioningly.

"Yes, it will require your leaving the palace," the Admiral continued as if responding to an interrogation, and then with grim humor added, "that notwithstanding the disappearance of the Kaiser and his Chancellor."

The Ministers shook their heads, indicating that it was impossible. The monarch, however, sat steadily watching and listening, flicking the ash now and then from his cigar and smoothing an end of leaf which had pulled loose.

"The reason this is necessary," the officer hastened to add, "is that your people will never understand the power of the United States nor believe in it on less distinguished testimony than that which you will be able to render. Even then it will be hard for them to comprehend that my country is in possession of an engine of war that could bring all nations to its feet, or annihilate them if it chose."

His hearers stiffened up for a moment, reading in this placid assertion a threat.

"No, it is not a menace to you or the world, if you will but grant my wish. Gentlemen, I am ask-

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ing you to be my guests in the name of humanity, which is above all rulers and above all Governments!" His voice was vibrant and almost pleading in his anxiety to gain his point.

The King alone seemed half inclined to go. "I have known Bevins for thirty years," he said slowly, "and we have been very good friends, indeed intimate at times, and I would intrust my life in his keeping; but a man and a King are two different beings. As a man I would go at once; but as the representative head of a nation I cannot take the risk unless there is no other way."

The Minister and the Lord of the Admiralty spoke together in their disapproval, and besought their superior to refuse such a demand under any and all conditions. Bevins saw that he was losing his point, and stepped into the breach.

"Wait!" he begged, rising to his feet. "Will Your Majesty permit me to bring other proof that what I ask is for the best?"

The King nodded.

"Then grant me an order to the guard at the door which will enable me to pass without interruption and return."

There was the pressure of a button, an order to the equerry to do as the visitor wished, and the officer bowed himself out of the room.

His Majesty's advisers began an impassioned appeal that he should under all circumstances

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refuse to leave the security of his palace. They pointed out the dangers which might assail him in many ways, despite the fact that his visitor was his friend; but to all of these advices he made no reply, lounging in a careless attitude and blowing wreaths of smoke toward the shaded electric lights above his head. There was a rap at the door, and it was thrown open by an equerry, who stood at attention, his face betraying no sign of anything unusual.

Into the room entered another visitor, followed by Bevins, who closed the door after him. The materialization of a ghost could have created no greater surprise. The King dropped his cigar on the carpet and, like his companions, jumped to his feet and stood like a statue. The Prime Minister's hand was half poised in the air and remained there, while the Lord of the Admiralty shoved his head forward in an attitude of awe struck questioning.

The King broke the silence. "Field! is that you?" he asked in utter astonishment.

"Yes, Your Majesty, it is I," and he advanced to meet the King, who suddenly held out his hand.

The others rushed forward almost incoherent in greeting the Admiral who had sailed away in command of the great fleet of demonstration and had been given up as dead.

Field was apparently enjoying the situation, and waited until they began to ask questions before

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expressing his views. "I am under my word of honor, or I might say parole——"

"Not that," Bevins interrupted. "You are not a prisoner."

"Well, under promise then, that I shall say nothing concerning the mystery which I now thoroughly understand." He made a little grimace as if the subject brought up unpleasant recollections of defeat, and went on, "I am here to-night as the guest of our friend the Admiral. He has told me of his failure to convince you that what he asks is necessary, and I have come to add my arguments to his, urging upon you to do as he says. He has told you the truth when he says that it may mean an end to war."

The ministers and the Lord of the Admiralty looked shocked; but the King made a decision without hesitancy. "I will accept, and believe it best that the others should accompany me." It was conclusive.

They donned their light coats, and when the monarch stepped from his wardrobe a moment later he too was garbed for his trip and preceded them down the hallways, through corridors and arched doors, over heavy carpets where the noise of their feet was deadened, and across tiled floors where the ring of their boot heels disturbed the silence. Only once did the King halt, and that was for Bevins to indicate whether it was desirable

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to pass through the private door or into the broader corridor leading toward the front of the palace. They chose the former course, passed the wondering sentry at the door, and out into the night. The odor of June flowers came to them on every side through the weird veil of fog, and from the drive beyond the pile of stone and brick came the steady clattering of horses' hoofs. They walked closely together, the King holding Bevins's arm. The sentry heard their feet steadily crunching out over the graveled walks, started at the sound of a melancholy, far reaching whistle, wondering whether it was a signal of some strange import, and then resumed his usual motionless attitude. The King and his ministers had been taken by the fog, the night, and the mystery.

CHAPTER XII

THE DREADNOUGHT RETURNS



THE falling of the heavens would have created little more consternation and excitement in London than the sight which met the residents' eyes on the morning following the King's visit to the Hippodrome. The fog which settled unexpectedly on that night of June dissipated itself as stealthily as it had come, and floated out with the dawn, leaving in its stead a clear sky. And then, as if a rare discovery had been made simultaneously by thousands instead of one, a swarm of people, defying the rush of motors, of omnibuses and hansoms, debouched on the Thames embankment by the stately pile of buildings where Parliament convenes, filled the roadsteads, jammed each other against the river wall, and scorned the constables, who vainly strove to maintain order and uninterrupted traffic.

There, resting serenely on the bosom of the river where in times before Roman galleys had floated, was the pride of the British navy, the Dreadnought. Neither an officer of the watch, a

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sailor, nor a marine bestrode her decks. Inert and untenanted, silent and lifeless, she lay close by the great gray buildings like the last survivor of a defeated army who had crept home to bring a report of disaster and was resting in the shadow of the last refuge. Her unmasked guns stared wide eyed and mournful; from her crippled funnels came no wisp of curling smoke; from her channels stretched no anchor chains; and she paid no heed to the vagaries of the sluggish current; her prow which had defiantly parted so many seas was nosed into the mud in helplessness; but as an only solace there floated from her stern the unsullied banner of the United Kingdom, and whipped as she was she had come back to her people with colors still flying.

The miracle of her position was greater than the marvel of her return; for above and below that spot on the river were bridges impassable for a boat of half her size, beneath which tugs and other craft were wont to lower their jointed stacks. In all the world there was no known strength or mechanical contrivance that could transport over shallows and bridges twenty-two thousand tons of steel, and then leave it in this prohibited place. Her very appearance bore mute testimony of singular strife. True, she was intact to a point flush with the great steel domes which held her menacing and frowning guns; but her fighting

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masts, her top rig, and the upper bands of her funnel were riven off as if by one devastating line shot taken full abeam or square astern. The wreckage of this hamper had been removed, so that no débris littered her deserted decks.

For many days of gloom it had been accepted as a fact that nothing but annihilation could account for the disappearance of that squadron which had doggedly sailed away into the mysterious West to vanquish a terrible and unknown enemy or meet a glorious death. Little hope had been sustained as the days of silence went by that any explanation of that defeat might be forthcoming, or that any vessel might return; and now before London's gathered populace was a grim relic which only added to conjecture. From no source could the secret of this mysterious visitation be learned; and so the crowd watched and waited.

A boat, whose flag distinguished her as being of the river patrol, obeyed a hail from the shore, pulled noisily up the stream against the outgoing tide, and circled round the leviathan as though suspecting danger from within. Her chief officer, after due caution, and receiving no response, cautiously directed her along side, and boarded the Dreadnought over the starboard quarter. The ever increasing crowd along the embankment drew in its breath in expectancy, waiting for a revelation. It heard him shout "Below there!" and

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leaned forward, listening for whatever response might be given; but nothing was heard save the steady lap of the water and the farthest sounds of early river traffic.

The officer advanced along the deck to the companionway, and leaned curiously into it repeating his hail, and once more there was a wait and no reply. He backed away from the entrance, and hesitated. It was plain that he desired witnesses before invading the precincts of a stricken craft, and in a moment more he stepped to the rail, held a short conversation with those on the decks of his boat and then waited till he was joined by others of that force that guards the Thames. Three men clambered aboard, and stood by him until they were joined by two others, who obeying a low spoken order, stationed themselves at the head of the companionway. The officer and his assistants advanced slowly, stepped into the darkness, and disappeared into the depths of the battleship, while the suspense along the embankment and on the patrol became more intense. It was several minutes before the investigators reappeared, and then they had gone only a short way into the vessel. They walked to the rail, and the crowd remained waiting. With British taciturnity they declined to answer any of the questions which were shouted to them from the shore.

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The little boat swung off, turned her nose out into the stream, and steamed hurriedly away at full speed, bent on summoning others of her service; and in less than half an hour returned accompanied by a small flotilla, which spread out and stationed its members close up against the sides of the stranded craft. Another officer of higher authority joined those waiting on the decks of the Dreadnought, and led the way below, ready to learn the worst. He went as into a plague ship manned by the dead expecting to meet nothing but grewsome relics of tragedy, and prepared for shocking sights.

From place to place he advanced almost on tip-toe, and followed by his companions who stared into darker corners or glanced fearfully behind when the echoes of their falling feet clumped hollowly through the steel cavern. Once a weird shriek caused them to spring toward each other with nervous fright, and when the ship's cat came mewling up to them, begging in its animal way for companionship, they looked foolishly at one another like boys who had been startled in the midst of ghost tales told by a camp fire in the woods.

Cabin after cabin and ward room after ward room was opened and searched; but nowhere could be found sign of disturbance or conflict. There was not another living being aboard to greet

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them, nor did they find more awful testimonials of war.

In the Captain's quarters, clean and business-like, the roll topped desk was closed, and the books on top of it were in order as for inspection. At its side stood a typewriter with the tin resting lightly upon it, and a stenographer's case notebook beside neatly checked and showing that the last letter or order had been completed. On the ward room table lay a magazine open and turned page downward as though the reader had desired to keep his place and had stepped away from it on a sudden call. In the galleys of this great floating home pots, pans, and kettles were placed in orderly array in their racks,—no thrifty housewife could have left her kitchen in better state. In the chart room the traced highways of the ocean's bed were drawn up in their closed cases, and the hoists were not loaded or littered with ammunition as would have been the case had the battleship been in action when overcome by the enemy. There was nothing above or below offering a key to the enigma.

Puzzled and overcome, the patrolmen took temporary charge of the ship, while a boat hurried away from the miniature flotilla, carrying a detailed report to the Admiralty, where the news was received with amazement no less than that which had brought the crowd on the embankment.

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Subordinates of departments called for their tardy superiors, telephone bells jangled, and British phlegm gave way to excitement; but even in this remarkable state precedent was maintained and routine observed, so that from man to man, going constantly upward, the report reached the first Lord of the Admiralty.

Then for the first time it was learned that this high and mighty official was missing from his home, and had been summoned to the palace in the night. No delay could be brooked in an event so startling, and with due ceremony inquiries were instituted for him. This caused an investigation in gray old Buckingham, which spread until it came to the head of Government, when it became known that not only was the naval officer missing, but no less a personage than the King of England as well.

In great disasters by sea or land where swift Death ravages, men cry aloud in their excitement and distress; but when a calamity threatens a nation and a King is involved, they seek to hide their emotions. Hence it was that in the palace men came hurriedly together without words to those around, and in whispers expressed their anxiety. It was recalled with alarm that the Kaiser had left his palace in an equally unceremonious manner, decoyed by a stranger, and enticed into the night. Nor was his fate as uncertain or with

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more ground for question, because there he had been traced to a carriage which had driven away. The King of England had gone into his garden, and the guards at the gates swore he had not passed the portals, which they watched. And for their pains they were doubted and placed under temporary detention until the King should return to prove that they were not in a conspiracy against the State.

Perhaps the alarm would have been less keen were it not for the tale of the Kaiser; but the cases were so parallel that the conclusion was instantly formed that England's monarch was probably in as great jeopardy as his fellow ruler who had now been gone for many days. The nobles looked at one another askance, and asked what times were these when no person might be so august as to be immune from seizure. Where was the limit to be reached? What could be expected next? Was there no possible protection even for the heads of Government and society?

In the offices of the Admiralty those of more or less prominence in the department held a conference and detailed men to take charge of the Dreadnought. There could be no attempt to rehabilitate her at that time, inasmuch as it would be impossible ever again to bring her into service without destroying a span of the bridge below; therefore no coroner's inquest could have con-

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vened with more solemnity than did those men who took charge of and boarded this great dead thing of the sea.

A derelict cast upon an open sandy beach offered more chance of salvage than the greatest vessel of the greatest navy of the world, nosed in the mud and practically walled in. And while she lay in this state of helplessness there was forming round English shores a formidable flotilla of other war vessels flying the British flag, which had been summoned from all waters of the globe to protect the mother country from German invasion or if need arose gallantly to seek death beds in the sea in the attempt to fend off the American terror should it be directed against the island ruler of the waves.

As they advanced, Captains of this great navy arrived in London in response to urgent summons and hastened to the Admiralty. One and all they were asked to pass expert opinion on the condition of the Dreadnought, and offer a solution of the methods used to bring her to that singular anchorage in the river; but, like children groping in the mist, they could formulate no tenable theory nor give any lucid explanation. They looked at each other in amazement, wagged their heads, and admitted their inability. Plague would have left dead men at their posts, or battle would have left more serious scars than the cutting away of the

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fighting masts and wrecking of the stacks; but even then who would navigate her to home waters, and what could account for her presence in a place where even a small sea going craft could not go? If that nation in the West had a submarine of terrific speed and unknown power, it might perhaps destroy a ship; but by what means could it force it under or over a bridge of solid masonry and steel?

And so the men of the sea passed down and back, while the people of London spent the time in trying to see the latest evidence of disaster, took turns in crowding to the embankment, and then went to their homes. Business came to a halt, shops were unopened, and desks were closed. In the Government offices men moved helplessly, and in homes throughout the country families sat within doors gravely discussing the latest manifestation of power.

Nor was the public aware that in higher circles another cause for anxiety had been uncovered, which was nothing less than the disappearance of the Prime Minister. A King, a Prime Minister, and the first Lord of the Admiralty taken at one time! It was sufficient to make others of prominence look at one another questioning when their turn might come and what the end would be. No one was safe in this great crisis, when thrones tottered on their settings and men were whisked

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away in the night, when the most powerful vessels of war created by all the wisdom of science and ingenuity of invention might be dominated and handled like toys.

There was no ground for belief that any power other than the United States might have been the controlling spirit in this long series of untoward events, but from that nation came no word, only a silence more menacing than the thunder of distant guns, and more terrible and ominous than an open display of invincible arms. It took no great stretch of imagination to people the air with phalanx on phalanx of stern and implacable foemen bent on invasion when the time seemed ripe. A country which could flaunt the world was capable of anything, and it was not believable that she was acting without a purpose. But what means did she intend to take? What would be her next move? How had she accomplished those victories already scored upon her tally sheet? Only one hope for partial explanation remained, and that was based upon the return to sanity of a maddened sailor who had come to them on a life raft from the unknown, as the only witness of a disaster, and the only living link.

And even while the anxious officials thought of him a group of surgeons and specialists were standing round a cot in a hospital watching this man breathe his last. Now that his importance

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had increased a hundredfold Death was intervening and sealing his lips. He passed away as silently as he had been found, his jumbled wits giving no new and tangible clew. Speechless he had been picked up on a life raft in mid ocean, and speechless he voyaged out into another world.

Night fell over London, infolding a stricken city where none came upon the streets and men within doors whispered to each other, dreading what the morrow might bring forth. The heart of Britain, beating with dogged determination to the last, was broken. America was the master of fate, and could deal out its awards or blows with the inexorableness of a god.

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING



It was January of that momentous year when the world's unrest reached a climax, and the President of the United States, his official day done, sat alone in his study, perusing a report from an agent of the State Department and mentally comparing it with preceding ones. The shaded light threw into relief against the darker shadows behind, the long, lean jaw, the grimly determined mouth, and the somber eyes, but lent a touch of softness to the queer little lines which told that on occasion the man could show infinite kindness and humanity.

Thrust forward from the ranks of the people into the most important office of the land, driven reluctantly into the arena of action from a seclusion which had for him the charms of peace, he was still a man in peculiar isolation. In this, the third year of his term, he was yet unknown and under constant discussion. Half of his countrymen hailed him as the Lincoln of his time, and the other half declared him a tyrant in embryo. He had fought

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so doggedly for his principles that he had estranged those who had been his most ardent supporters. His disregard for party projects had cost him the friendship of politicians; his advocacy of certain reforms had subjected him to caustic comments; his very dignity and sensitiveness had been mistaken for austerity; and only his most intimate friends understood that in him beat a great heart filled to overflowing for his country and fellow men. These comprehending friends were few; but among them, perhaps the most intimate, was the friend of his boyhood, "Old Bill" Roberts the inventor.

Between these two there existed that singular affection found rarely among master minds where each admires qualities in the other which he himself lacks. To Roberts the President was the greatest statesman of the century, and to the President Roberts was the most accomplished scientist and inventor who had ever lived; but on this night, laden with fate in which each was to play his part, the mind of neither was on the other. The inventor was absorbed in the last of a series of experiments that had enmeshed him in a dream whereby he hoped to eradicate friction, and the President was perturbed by reports for which he had waited many weeks.

These latter were exhaustive in detail, and in recapitulation tersely predicted that it would be

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almost an impossibility to avert war with Japan as soon as she reached a state of preparation. They summed up her naval strength, which they declared almost equal at the time of writing to that of the United States, and told how every navy yard in Japan was rushing construction with all available speed both night and day, so that her augmented squadrons when built would be superior to those of the great Republic. They reviewed the land preparations by showing that a greater number of men were being drilled than ever before in the country's history, and that the redoubtable army sent against Russia would be small in comparison with that which could be mobilized for another invasion. The reports expressed the belief that Japanese capitalists were anxious to seize the Philippines, and were encouraging the ambitions of the Emperor of Nippon to the full extent of their purses, hoping ultimately to find another outlet for investment under their own flag. As if in proof that the Government was supporting this bellicose attitude, the reports gave as a certainty that some high authority was dictating the editorial policies of the Japanese press, and in all ways possible fomenting the ill feeling against the United States.

There could be no underestimation of the ability of the naval officer who had made these statements; for he had passed more than ten years in

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that station of the Orient, spoke the language thoroughly well, understood the people, and above all was no alarmist. He gave it as his final opinion that within six months, Japan, her navy completed, her soldiers drilled to perfection, and her treasury well supplied with gold, would find pretext for a declaration of war. The only means of preventing this deplorable event, in his judgment, was to place the American navy in such a state of pronounced superiority that it would stay the war-like Japanese and hold them in the leash of awe.

The President read the last clause again, and with a sigh of discontent leaned back in his chair. Hour after hour he brooded over the complexities of the situation, and late at night came to the conclusion that he must lose no time in calling together his most trusted advisers, lay the report before them, and then by consultation and discussion decide which would be the most promising policy to pursue in so grave a crisis. Before he retired the orders were given to his secretary which resulted in the first meeting of that coterie of men who were to assume the full responsibility for the conduct of the war which afterwards fulfilled the expert's prediction.

They gathered informally on the following night, nor could it have been observed by their demeanor that they were to discuss a situation of vital importance to the nation; but, forewarned by

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the President's call, they expected news of distressing import, and therefore were not surprised in the least at the tenor of the statement which was read to them. They listened attentively, and remained silent when the last words were spoken, each waiting for the other to express an opinion. The President, grave and calm, looked from one to the other as if inviting freedom of speech, and then turned to the Secretary of the Navy, a crusty man who was given to open expression.

"Mr. Sessions," he said, "you are probably better informed than any other man of the possibilities of bringing the navy to a point where it may be regarded as resistless. What have you to say?"

The latter showed signs of ill temper. He wiped the shining dome of his head, and stared across the tops of his horn bowed glasses at his colleagues. "For three years now," he replied bitterly, "I have endeavored to get appropriations consistent with the needs of the country; did everything I could with dignity and a little more; tried to get friends to pass bills, and gave them statistics showing just what our position would be in this event; but there were always a few 'watch dogs of the treasury' who succeeded in defeating everything attempted."

The President looked at him reprovably, but said nothing. The others gave him silent sym-

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pathy, knowing that in case of disastrous war he would be the one to stand in the limelight and defend himself for not working miracles unaided. The gratitude of Kings was no more open to sarcasm than the gratitude of Republics.

"The report says," continued the secretary gloomily, "that war may be anticipated in six months at the furthest, and that our only safeguard is to bring our navy up to a formidable force before that time. Well, we can't do it! With all the facilities at our command we can't build ships in a night, nor drill men to man them in a day. We shout about our resources, and we have them; but it takes time to utilize them."

His outspoken pessimism loosened his hearers' tongues; but the most optimistic could find nothing encouraging to say. It was obvious that the country in any event would be unprepared. They were discussing emergency plans, when the President's secretary appeared in the doorway. They turned to him, wondering what could claim the chief executive's attention at that time of the night. The secretary walked over to the President and addressed him in a low tone. They caught scraps of the conversation.

"Says he wants to see me to-night?"

"Yes, and I didn't like to refuse a man of his prominence, or one who is so closely your friend."

"Won't he talk to you?"

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"Not much! Just laughed, and said he wanted to see you personally."

"Well, go tell him I would be glad to see him ordinarily; but that I am in a conference of great importance with friends. Ask him to say what hour he prefers to see me to-morrow."

The secretary bowed and left the room, and the conversation was resumed. It continued only a moment before he again appeared, and the President turned toward him.

"Doctor Roberts seems a little annoyed," the secretary apologized, "and insisted on my coming back to tell you that he wanted to see you now."

The President and others in the room laughed tolerantly, knowing the inventor's peculiarities.

"What else did he say?" the President asked.

"Said he'd be hanged if he'd go until he saw you." The laughter in the room increased. "Said he had found something that would enable the Government to whip the Japanese; had been reading reports showing there was no time to waste, and wanted to tell you about it at once."

The merriment subsided as quickly as it had been provoked, and the hilarious ones, grown grave, looked at each other in astonishment and wonder. Here at the very moment of distress was a man who had done more toward strengthening the nation's agents of offense and defense than

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any other individual, confidently asserting that he could show them the way out of their difficulties. The President ordered that the caller be conducted to the room at once.

Had it been any less a personage than the famous inventor, they would have paid small heed to the promise of hope; had they been informed in less troublous times that such an invention was pending, they would have looked upon it with great interest and curiosity; but now, when all avenues of escape seemed closed, when the eagle's perch was rocking beneath its talons, and it was threatened by merciless foemen, they stared at each other in amazed silence like men who had been reprieved.

It was in the midst of this stillness that the inventor entered the room and stood bewildered for a moment, peering from beneath the thatch of his brows at one and another. Then, satisfied that his visit was opportune and that none was present whom he did not know, he gave them individual greeting as his acquaintanceship warranted.

"You were not expecting me," he addressed the President; "but it appears to me that there is no one here who should not know what I have to say, and who is not directly interested in what I have to show. I am glad you are all here, gentlemen," he concluded, turning to the others.

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And then, following the example of the President, he seated himself, and the others did likewise. They were strung with a suspense which he did not share. "Informal, isn't it?" he asked the President, and when assured that such was the case he calmly drew a handkerchief from his pocket and swept it across the dome of his forehead.

All were waiting for him to speak; but, with exasperating slowness, and without asking permission from the President, he thrust a hand into the roomy folds of his sack coat and produced a bundle of long stogies, one of which he carefully withdrew and examined with great care. He thrust it into his mouth and revolved it, apparently for the purpose of tightening a loose wrapper. He turned to the chief executive. There was an air of expectancy in the room and a leaning forward, that no word of the great secret might be lost. They caught all he said.

"Got a match, Mr. President?" he asked with the utmost nonchalance.

They dropped back into their seats, some with exasperation and others smiling. The President gravely supplied his want, and then, as the evil odor of the weed was wafted round the room, he sat back in his chair, with the tips of his fingers touching each other. The Secretary of War was beginning to fidget with impatience.

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Roberts puffed three or four times, fixed his eyes on a cornice as if he was the sole occupant of the room, then calmly reached into a pocket and drew out a parcel which he laid on the President's desk. While every eye was fixed upon him he tilted the stogy in his mouth to an angle where the smoke would not interfere with his operations, and began unwrapping the package, throwing the newspapers on the floor at his feet. Then came a fold of silk, and last of all a sheet of tissue paper, whose crackling crispness sounded startlingly loud in the stillness of the room.

"There!" he remarked triumphantly, exposing two small plates of metal not differing greatly in appearance from two pieces of burnished steel. Eagerly all those in the room crowded forward, while the President gingerly took one of the slabs in his fingers.

"New explosive?" he asked.

"No, they're harmless." The inventor smiled.

The others looked eagerly at them as the President held them, wondering what connection the two little strips of metal could possibly have with the defense of a nation against a multitude of battleships. Nothing but Roberts's known ability prevented them from looking upon him as a crank. They inspected the objects before them in turn, passing them from hand to hand with blank looks. Only the Secretary of War, who in his earlier years

had been a metallurgist, showed any signs of surprise or amazement. He turned excitedly away and crossed the room to a side light, against which glare he held the little plate, staring at it fixedly. The inventor smiled, and the others renewed their interest. The secretary hurried back.

"What on earth is it, Dr. Roberts?" he asked, and then without waiting for an explanation continued, "I never saw a metal that looked or felt like it. What is it?"

"Gentlemen," said the inventor, recovering the slab and balancing it in his hands, "that is a new plate that can be made cheaply and quickly. If it does what the laboratory tests show, it will, when applied to cruisers which can now steam twenty knots an hour, make fifty knots an easy gait for them."

There was a gasp of astonishment amounting almost to incredulity among those who crowded round, and the scientist, enjoying the effect of his words, smiled and smoked. A moment's pause ensued while the possibilities of the discovery dawned on them. Those who knew him least were again questioning his sanity, and then, as if all at once they could wait no longer for him to explain, they burst into a chorus of questions, which he did not answer. He waited until no voice was heard, and then began.

"That plate practically overcomes friction. My

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assistant, my daughter Norma, and I have made several tests before I came here with it. These were cast and tested last night. I am not going into scientific details; but this much I'll make plain: A ship coated along certain lines with that metal, electrified only to a point where she would not sink for lack of support, can reduce her skin friction caused by the water to a point where her speed would be something hitherto unknown. It would of course mean lighter armaments, because the lighter the dead tonnage the greater the buoyancy. But a cruiser with a few long range, high explosive guns, that can travel at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour, or a submarine that can make that speed for twenty-four hours at a stretch, would play havoc with any navy in the world."

The room was alive with excited men now as the full force of his statement came in all its clearness. If that unknown metal had that property, and sufficient fighting ships could be armored with it in time to meet the demands made upon them, the seas could be whipped into subjection and legions of troops transported before they could be interfered with. The President himself had lost his calmness and was gripping the arms of his chair. The Secretary of the Navy, having the practical point of view, came out of his trance, and snapped out a question:

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“How long would it take to equip a cruiser with those plates?”

Roberts turned toward him. “Depends on the plant. The plates can be cast and electrified just as rapidly as you could cast sheets of plain iron and turn a current into them; but I wish to experiment a little further first and try them out on some old gunboat that wouldn’t amount to much if lost.”

The room was again filled with a babel of sound, as the officials began an argument; but on one point they were agreed. The man before them was so well known that the Government was taking no great hazard in affording him every means within its power to carry out his work, and, if he could do what he believed, and of that there seemed no room for doubt, the solution of the approaching war, or any other, was in their hands. The President alone sat buried in thought, his brows drawn into a frown.

“Gentlemen,” he said, and there was that in his voice which demanded attention, “I should like to ask Dr. Roberts a few questions. I wish to know if this work of his can be carried on so secretly that no other Power—not one, nor even the people of this country—can become aware of his discovery; if he can suggest a means for such concealment; if his work can be done so expeditiously, with full Government support, that within three months

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from to-night the American navy can be so equipped as to make it the most powerful in the world; and whether he realizes the importance of such haste."

The scientist threw his half finished stogy into the ash receiver before him and became grave. He was the dignified, thoughtful man again, weighing his words and speaking with deliberation. "Mr. President," he answered, "I am not completely beyond the experimental stage; but I believe I can plan such secrecy as you desire, and with the aid of men and money make the United States navy invincible in less than three months. I would almost stake my life and reputation on it. But why, may I ask, do you desire to keep it from the world's knowledge that you have such power?"

The President walked up and down the room with his hands behind his back as if in a dream, while the others waited for his reply. "Because we are facing war with Japan, a skillful, advanced, and cunning enemy, and there must be no risk of its discovering our secret. Its spies are everywhere in the land. Hostilities are to be courted in this emergency rather than declined, provided they can be rendered harmless to ourselves and humane to our adversaries. To talk of power without demonstrating it, is as idle as a braggart's boasting. To maintain silence and then prove

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ability, is to make one's action doubly impressive."

He started to say more, his big somber eyes glowing with some new thought, and then, as if afraid of his own conceptions, stood expectantly before his lifelong friend who was facing him. "Bill, Bill!" he said brokenly, "do you see what depends upon you? Why, man, the nation itself, the lives of thousands of fathers and an army of our boys; yes, more than all that, the peace of the world! Good God, man! Try to realize what you have, and what we can do, if those two pieces of metal will do all you think they will!"

His long ungainly arms reached out, and he put his hands upon the smaller man's shoulders. Those within the room awoke to a realization of the magnitude of the power that was possible, and stood in awed silence, spectators of a tableau. From the broad sweep of the river without came the wailing whistle of a belated steamer, seeking its way through the fog that had settled down. The measured tramp of a patrolman in front of the huge white building came reverberating to their ears, cast back from the empty street, and thus they stood, centering their attention on a little, wizened old man who had grasped one of Nature's secrets and was now offering it as a nation's salvation. In this light he loomed to gigantic proportions, and seemed possessed of Titanic power.

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Oblivious to the others in the room, his restless eyes gleamed and probed those of his friend.

"Paul," he said in an oddly constrained voice, dropping back to the boyhood phrase, "I can make good. I'm at my country's service, and I've made no mistake in what I said." He swung sharply round to the others, and his clenched hands swept the air in a sudden frenzy of determination. He was the enthusiast once more, daring, dreaming, positive, and sanguine.

"Send me the two best engineers in the navy and the two best supply men to-morrow morning. I'll tell them what we need and they can tell me how soon they can deliver it where I want it. I'll want machinery and apparatus, supplies and assistants. Money and men! Money and men! They can't beat us! They can't beat us!"

His hands came back to his sides. He folded the precious pieces of metal into their coverings, while the others stood silently by, and, as if abashed by his own outburst, bade them a curt "Good night," and walked from the room. The others, with the burden of reticence upon them, filed after him one by one, contemplating the strange change which might be wrought by this night's work, and wended their way to their homes.

The fog settled down closer and impartially spread itself over the river, the White House, and

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the patrolman on his beat, but until the dawn came stealthily peering over it all the President wrapped in thought, sat at his desk, and in imagination saw invincible ships of war bound out to certain victory. And all his hope was founded on a war for peace.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF A CITY



LIKE criminals afraid of the light, and seeking the cover of darkness, a score of the most distinguished men of the United States, occupying its most responsible positions, and bearing the burden of government, came to the White House, which loomed massive and apparently untenanted. They came singly, obeying the instructions given them, left their conveyances at a distance, and walked unattended to the dark portals, which opened and closed behind them. All were aware of the portentous reason for their visit, and the importance of the utmost secrecy. Observant indeed would have been the foreign spy who could have surmised that they were gathering to discuss a plan involving the defense of the nation, or the acceptance of a challenge to war.

There were only two visitors who came together, the inventor and his daughter, and they were the last to enter the room, where those who preceded them were divided into groups round four officers of the navy, who were answering

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questions, quoting figures, and volunteering details which were not written. The men at the head of the nation were preparing to plunge headlong into what under less immediate menace would have seemed a sea of folly ready to submerge them and their country.

The entrance of Norma was the signal for an abrupt halt in the conversation, and some of those who were not entirely familiar with the part which she played in her father's work looked at her disapprovingly.

He, interpreting these glances, introduced her as his assistant, and concluded by saying, "I can't do anything without her. She knows more about my work than I do myself, and as far as I know she's the only woman living who can keep her mouth shut."

They smiled at his manner and cynicism, while the President tendered her a seat at his side and waited for the others to resume their chairs.

"All of you are familiar now with the possibilities of the invention offered by Doctor Roberts——"

"And his daughter Norma," interjected the inventor.

The President accepted the alteration and continued without a halt,—“and have gone over the reports of the four most expert men in the United States navy, who have passed the day with the in-

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ventor and his daughter in their laboratory, are convinced of the merit and practicability of the discovery, and have prepared statements of what supplies would be needed, the time in which they could be obtained, and their approximate cost."

There was a look of acquiescence, and the Secretary of the Navy, who had been paying no heed whatever to the chief executive's remarks, rustled the reports in his hand as he turned another page to scan its contents. The room became still again, and the speaker went on.

"Doctor Roberts tells us that he does not regard himself as beyond the experimental stage; but further experiments cannot decrease known values, and may perhaps add to them. This invention as it stands, in the opinion of the four men who have passed the day in testing it, is sufficient to enable us within three months to combat successfully any nation which might begin hostilities."

Norma looked at her father admiringly; but he seemed oblivious to all those round him, and sat absorbed in thought, his eyes fixed in a blank stare of concentration into space, and the thumbs of his clasped hands revolving round each other aimlessly. The President reached over to a mass of papers before him, referred to some of them in quest of data, and then looked very grave and earnest as he continued in a lower voice:

"Extraordinary times demand extraordinary

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measures. We are without precedent, and are confronting an emergency of such immense import that those of us who were here last night believe it is a time when all rules, official routine, and regular methods must give way in behalf of quick accomplishment. We have no time in which to seek special appropriations; but must take it upon ourselves to levy upon the various budgets which are now open for the considerable sums necessary to prosecute this work."

One or two, who were evidently late arrivals and had not heard the earlier discussions, looked at each other with some hesitation. It was hard to drop routine and dip into the nation's treasury on such short consideration. The high dignity of the presiding officer, however, forbade any interruption, and he went on unchallenged.

"The absolute preservation of our secret is recognized by all as a vital necessity, and to obviate all leakages the members of the army and navy board suggest that our work be carried on in one of the most secluded of the Florida keys. On this they purpose to erect a plant adequate to cast and perfect this metal on which we depend, and as rapidly as possible apply it to the vessels of our navy, which will be sent there as quickly as preparations can be made for their reception."

Norma, who had not been informed of this part of the project, gave a start of protest foreseeing

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that she too would have to share in this isolation and become an exile until the experiments were concluded. Her father turned a questioning look toward her, and then reached over and patted her hand in sympathy. The President was steadily summing up the situation.

“The Navy Department will attend to purchasing supplies, including machinery and crude metals necessary for the first work, while Doctor Roberts will place his orders for apparatus, and all will be consigned to the collier Penobscot, which will transport them to the chosen spot. The gunboat Harper will accompany her, and will be the first boat to be experimented upon and equipped with the new plates. Rear Admiral Brockton will be assigned to her command for the present. These two ships will sail from New York harbor, together with a small transport which will carry such engineers and mechanics as the Navy Department may select for a work of this importance. Communication will be maintained by such means as seem best to Admiral Brockton, and more men and supplies will be dispatched from time to time as required. It is needless to say that the entire experimental work, the casting of the plates, and the general supervision of everything will be under the direction of Doctor Roberts.”

“And his assistant,” the inventor again interjected.

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The Secretary of the Navy, obeying a suggestion from the chair, read off a long list of figures, explaining them as he went, and concluding with an unqualified indorsement of the plan. So infectious was his blunt enthusiasm and confidence, that those who at first had hesitated at the irregularity of the procedure found themselves won over, and bound with complete unanimity into a coterie which was to assume responsibility for a war. And thus was the issue accepted.

The early hours of the morning were upon them as they dispersed, but Norma, resting back in the corner of the cab which conveyed her homeward, did not share the elation of her father, who was already building workshops, conducting new experiments, and equipping a navy. Yesterday she had looked forward to confiding the story of their great success to Guy Hillier; for in the preceding month, when she and her father had been trembling on the very verge of a great discovery in unknown fields, she had given no intimation of their work or their prospects, planning this surprise, and now, by the rigid embargo of silence thrust upon her, her dream was dissipated. To her the production of this radioactive metal had meant a goal; but now, that it was reached and she was anxious to satisfy a heart hunger, she had been given another task, and was to undergo more silence and repression and another siege of work

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in a world of figures, of test tubes and retorts, a slave to the lamp of science and her father's success. Not even the knowledge that she was sacrificing herself on the altar of duty to country, whose protection and welfare were burdens that she must share, palliated the bitterness of holding love aloof. And in this light the triumphs of invention seemed hollow and the night filled with dreariness.

There were no more regular meetings of those who conspired for the national good; but it was a season of terrific activity, and February was yet young when there sailed away from New York harbor one night a gunboat, a collier, and a small transport, whose destinations were unknown, and which slipped their moorings in silence and passed down the bay with scarcely a sound to announce their departure.

On board the gunboat were men accustomed to unquestioning obedience, and on the transport was a little army of skilled mechanics and engineers who had been called from their usual occupation by imperative orders and requested to tell none but their families that they might be absent for several months. There was not a man aboard any of the craft who had not taken a pledge of absolute secrecy.

The collier, black and massive, was loaded almost beyond her carrying capacity, and even on

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her decks were piled lumber and great sheets of corrugated iron, bearing evidence of full holds below. And all this cargo had the history of rushed work behind it. Strange pieces of machinery, sections of engines, powerful dynamos, and unheard of apparatus were stowed away with cases of chemicals, and the mines of the North, the West, and the South had contributed crude metals or partially smelted ores to the assortment. Driven by expert minds and masters of executive work, an army of men in different walks of life had given their ingenuity and effort toward something of which they knew not, and then the result of their labors had poured out upon a wharf, been swallowed up by the cavernous holds of a collier, and were now being carried out into the broad reaches of the Atlantic, with destination unknown.

A general order had been issued and made public, that, inasmuch as the poaching of Cuban fishermen on American grounds round lower Florida and the keys demanded attention, the gunboat *Penobscot* had been detailed to patrol those waters. In the United States this attracted no attention; but the swarthy fishermen of the tropics took warning and no longer steered their smacks to the forbidden waters, shrugging their shoulders in impotent wrath.

Rumor had it that the transport was carrying mechanics and laborers to the Philippines, where a

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new drydock was to be constructed, and the collier was generally supposed by men of the waterfront to be laden with materials for this work. And so, despite the momentous significance of the sailing of these three ships, the world remained in ignorance, paid little heed, or forgot.

Those voyagers who were in the secret looked forward with eagerness to the task before them, realizing to the full that on them depended much. And of these was Norma, who leaned over the stern rail of the Penobscot as it dropped down the harbor, watched the lights of the city grow dim in the distance, saw the great, silent Statue of Liberty rear itself against the sky, and felt the first free swell lift and sway the deck beneath her feet. Her departure had not been pleasant.

There on the land behind was the man whom she seemed doomed forever to hold at arm's length. She had parted from him with the announcement that her father was compelled to go south for a time, and had insisted on her accompanying him. For how long? Ah, that could be but conjecture; perhaps for two or three months. Was he ill? No, not exactly; but he was going away and needed her. Yes, she would write occasionally from Miami, Florida; but not often, because her charge would demand her time. And so, answering and evading, filled with yearning, and yet debarred from giving confidence, she had

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bidden him good by and come to this: sailing away in the night with all the furtiveness and mystery which enshrouded pirate ships of old bent on plunder and rapine.

The days of the voyage were much alike: filled with work. Down in the cabins the engineers and machinists drew hasty plans of buildings, then marked spots where machines were to have floor space, drew diagrams for transmission of power, and consulted charts showing the depths of water round their prospective shipyard. They had not even time to watch the devious course in and out among the islands which marked their entry to the scene of toil. When the pulsations of the screw stopped and the ship ceased her vibrations, they were still at their several tasks, and were disturbed when the anchor chains went rumbling through their hawser pipes.

Like an army of ants, drilled and acclimated, they swarmed out upon the land, the sappers clearing the way, the carpenters donning their aprons and grasping their tools while piles of lumber, kegs of bolts and nails, and mountains of iron sheathing accumulated upon the beach. And then, as the ringing of a multitude of hammers and the steady biting song of the saws filled the air with sounds of industry, great cases of machinery swung up from the holds, floated dizzily to the bulwarks, and went slowly down to the lighters. A

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city of tents sprang up as by necromancy, with gutters to carry off the rains, and sewers to prevent disease. Camp surgeons accustomed to sanitation superintended these outposts, paying as much attention to the spreading of a mosquito net to keep away the dread stygomia, as to tautening the canvas roofs and clearing the grounds.

All available means of a resourceful nation had been gathered together as an expert driver seizes the reins of a four-in-hand and guides his horses along a known road to a given destination, and all with the regularity which would distinguish the work had it been the most unimportant action of every day industry.

Norma, having no part in this task of construction, wandered idly up and down the decks or round the clearing throughout the day; and as she watched she saw the birth of a miniature city, saw the heaps of material on the beach dissipated, saw tall steel smokestacks poke their summits upward supported by spider like cables, saw shining, corrugated roofs spread themselves protectingly over floors whereon machinery was already being placed, and wondered at the accomplishment.

The sun went down, losing itself among the keys and waters of the farther west, before a bugle gave a quick imperative summons and the toilers dropped their tools for the evening meal. Many of the officers, some of them grimy and stained

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with work, their linen no longer immaculate, and their hair unkempt, came aboard the gunboat for dinner. They ate hurriedly like men in the field, and one by one, with scant apology to their fellow diners, disappeared. Norma was almost the last to leave the cabin and appear on deck, which to her surprise was vacant. Even as she glanced along its deserted length there came a whistle from the shore.

Darkness had descended abruptly and piled its blackness over the islands and seas of the tropics. The palm trees and shrubbery out to the west were silhouetted against the last faint light of day, and from the swamps of the inland came the cries of night fowl, the whir and chirruping noise of insect life, and the monotonous croaking of frogs. Swinging here and there in erratic circles, like fairies of the jungle carrying lighted lanterns, went the fireflies on aimless journeyings, not a few but many thousands of them, as if in a wild dance of curiosity, looking through the night to learn what manner of things these were that had come upon them so suddenly, ripped away their forests, and built strange mansions in their solitudes.

It was not this, however, that chained her attention. High up over this mushroom city where all had been silent and darkening when she went below, now gleamed myriad lights strung as by a genii of the lamp while others rested from their

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toil. White, flaring streaks of brilliance thrust spearlike rays into the gloom, illuminating below them the creation of a day. From the distance came the steady hum of steam driven dynamos, telling with monotonous insistence that there would be no cessation until the last spike was driven, the last machine set, and the last belting hung. Into this spot of the night began to come black figures answering the call of the siren. On a sudden, as if by preconcerted signal, the echoes again awoke to the clang of hammers on steel and the hum of voices in command. Like weird pygmies doomed to twist their thews in never ending effort, she saw them resume their uncompleted task, exerting themselves unceasingly for its accomplishment.

A launch which had come alongside on some errand was sputtering spasmodically at the foot of the ladder below as if impatient to be off. She boarded it, and in a few minutes a smart young naval officer stepped into the stern, gave a curt order, and they raced away toward the shore.

"Ah, good evening, Miss Roberts," he said, suddenly spying her. "Looking for your father, who went ashore awhile ago, I presume? I'm going right in his direction, and will be glad to guide you." He seemed too busy for further conversation, and almost before the boat had come to a stop sprang to the shingle and offered his hand.

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Through steadily working groups of men, past unfinished buildings, and over lighted floors where machinists wrought with levers and wrenches, they went to the far side of the camp. Here were officers with coats cast off and sleeves rolled up, and laborers in overalls intent on setting a huge blast furnace; and in the very heart of this activity, besmirched with dirt, his hat discarded, and his shirt thrown open, she found her father. Not even he with all his weight of years could resist this terrific call of energy. She stood and watched for a few minutes, while he, the master spirit of the group, directed the work. It seemed to have passed its critical point, and after some final instructions to the engineer in charge he straightened up and looked round.

"Hello, here's the assistant," he said, walking toward her and looking fondly into her eyes. She besought him to rest, and her appeals were seconded by those of the officers who feared for the physical strength of this man on whom so much depended, and who would have guarded him as a precious jewel of untold worth. He protested at first, and then, like one waking from a dream and suddenly conscious of a great weariness, made no objection when the Rear Admiral, who now looked like a workman, put his hat upon his head and tendered him his coat. He permitted them to throw it over his shoulders, and finally, with a look

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of infinite satisfaction at the growing structure before him, took his daughter's arm and tramped away. He was an old man again, yielding the tribute of age to the toil of youth.

They boarded the boat and sought their cabins; but even as they retired there came to them through the open portholes, like a lullaby, the sounds of unremitting labor intermingled with the lap of waves on the coral beach. The first creative step toward a national victory and supremacy had been taken in a day, even while the war cloud across western seas was gathering strength for its overcast; and, waiting, wondering, and expectant, the world was unaware.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT DISCOVERY



FROM the shore came a dull, moaning sound, now rising, now falling, but incessant, as if some gigantic animal, stricken and suffering, was shrieking the anguish of its death throes to the solitudes of the keys and the waste of waters round them. The frightened birds took flight to the north to escape the weird monotone, and the timid animals of the forest cowered in fear; but the men of the island looked at one another exultantly, with mutual congratulations on the rapidity of their work. The blast furnace which was to cast the plates was being blown in.

Days and nights of unremitting toil had followed that first landing; machine shops had been completely installed, power plants perfected, and buildings for the men erected; additional supplies had been received; and another gunboat, the *Columbia*, augmented the patrol which passed ceaselessly round the keys, guarding their secret and warning inquisitive fishermen to avoid the waters; corps of expert smelting men from the

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mines of the west had joined the colony,—and all for this, the casting of the first plate, which was to take place this day.

In the assay rooms there had been the constant testing of crude metals, and apportioning them and discarding those which were inferior. Trained hands were those that worked over the bucking boards and manipulated the delicate scales which would register the tiniest mark of a lead pencil with as great accuracy as they would a pound weight. Everywhere about the plant were men who wrought with precision and interest, bound together in the great enterprise until differences in station were forgotten and all were as a family praying for success.

“Old Bill” Roberts, assisted by his daughter, had permitted no foot but theirs to enter the room where his apparatus was installed, and no hand but theirs to touch its complicated mechanism. With the love of a creator he had spent the last hours fondling its cold, unresponsive parts and adjusting it, and then stood and watched, as a mother watches her firstborn, the initial movements of the great masterpiece which was a mystery to all the world but him and Norma.

Engineers and officers from all parts of the plant, warned that the crucial test was at hand, gathered round the door of the innermost room, until invited in by the inventor, and then slowly

entered and found standing places at a safe distance from the intricate mass, whose polished knobs, twisted bars, and gleaming tubes seemed to them a tangled riddle. Norma, garbed in the stained khaki wrapper which she wore in the laboratory at home, hovered here and there round the apparatus, lightly trying an adjustment or closely inspecting a joint, her face grave, calm, and self possessed. Her father, his thin old face drawn into a scowl of concentration, busied himself likewise, and made the final connections. So careful was he that he even inspected the duplicate apparatus which stood as a reserve at the other end of a casting mold, but which it was not his intention to use except in case of emergency. Satisfied that all was in readiness, he beckoned to two assistants, who trundled in the first composite plate and deposited it in its bed. He made the connection with the electrodes in a few minutes' deft work, and then straightened up and looked about the room, where all was still and expectant.

The wondering engineers saw him wave his daughter back a short distance as though fearing for her safety, watched him take a final look over his appliance, and then throw a switch. Brilliant streaks of purple, of unknown reds and glaring whites, raced each other in quick succession through the tubes, little indicators here and there sparked out malevolently, and the machine seemed

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to leap, strain, and throb with a life of its own, uncanny and mysterious because of its silence. The group of men peered curiously at the plate, saw it glow a dull red, pass the cherry stage to a dull pigeon blue, and then suddenly burst into a gleaming mass of iridescent white.

“Fusion!” one of the engineers whispered to a man beside him. “He has fused that plate in less time than it could be done by any means I ever heard of. That is the way he metamorphoses his metal.”

The rays died out, the apparatus stopped its quivering, and the inventor with hands clasped behind him stood intently watching the now cooling metal. Within the laboratory all was silence. From the adjoining buildings came the regular sound of hammers, and from somewhere off toward the cabins a man's voice was raised in a song of soldiery. The sheet of metal lost its color and became dark. Old Bill Roberts pressed a button above his head, and cooling sprays began dissipating themselves over its surface, sending up brief splutterings and clouds of rapidly diminishing steam.

“It's cool enough now to handle,” he said in an oddly constrained tone of voice, turning to the engineers, “and if some of you will help me carry it to the testing tank you may see me prove the first plate on which hangs the fate of our country.”

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In an awed hush of expectancy they all volunteered; but only three men were needed to hold it while it was attached to the great arms which were to revolve it in the water and demonstrate its resistance. The inventor threw a switch, and the sheet began to move. Before him was a dial, and beneath it a scale of friction pulls showing the resistance offered by normal metal. He fastened his eyes on the indicator with a look of strained watchfulness. Slowly the needle point swung round as the arms gained the maximum of speed, and then it came to a standstill, while a look of doubt and perplexity crept over the scientist's face.

"Norm," he called huskily,—“Norm! Was everything all right? Is everything working true?”

She took a step behind him, and with a look no less worried than his own stared at the dials indicating the speed of revolution and the scale of resistance. “Yes, father,” she replied gently, “everything is all right.” She put her arm over his shoulder as if to shield him. “But something must have gone wrong somewhere else. Come away now, and let us think it over.”

She turned to the waiting officers behind and looked them calmly in their faces, while the inventor, dazed and uncomprehending, ran his fingers through his shock of white hair and gazed at

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the telltale dials as if hypnotized by two staring eyes.

"Gentlemen," she said, "the first experiment is a failure!"

Those among them who had been slightly skeptical smiled at one another, while those whose belief had been more firm looked sympathetically at this slip of a girl, who faced them all in steady defiance, her trust in her father, herself, and their invention unshaken and unfaltering.

"You, Mr. Jenkins," she said, addressing one of the engineers, "are yourself a scientist and an experimentalist. You of all present know how easy it is for a tiny mistake to rob delicate work of definite result." There was a note of appeal in her voice that reached them all.

As if with one accord they rushed forward, grasping her hand and surrounding her father, giving them words of encouragement.

It was the gruff voice of the old Admiral which aroused them to renewed action. "Pshaw, Bill! that's nothing," he growled. "Here! We've got more plates cast. Throw another on, and give it a try out. Wake up, man! Wake up! We've got to make it go!"

Jenkins and two others rushed to the adjoining room and brought in a second slab of metal, and the old inventor, giving himself a shake as if pulling back from the very vortex of despair, with

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trembling hands placed the sheet of insulation and made the new connections with the plate.

"Norm," he almost whispered, "you look it over and turn the current on this time. Somehow my eyes seem to have gone back on me."

Again they watched from a distance the steady movements of the assistant, who without a tremor threw on the current, held it in leash, and directed it as if within her hand she held the clutch of a friend. Once more they saw the metal cool, the sprays turned on, and then came a dull, grinding, riving sound, and a column of dust shot up into the air and bellowed out over the room. They saw her fall back unconscious as if from some sudden shock, and instinctively sprang to her aid.

In mortal fear that some disaster had overtaken her, some unknown injury from that apparatus whose voltage was as deadly as that which sweeps through a murderer's chair, they picked her up and carried her out into one of the draughting rooms and laid her limp form on a table.

Her father in a burst of terrible anxiety tore open her corsage and ran his hand over her heart. "She's not dead!" he whispered hoarsely. "She's been knocked out by a wild current or something I don't understand."

A long breath of relief encircled the room. Not until she recovered consciousness and sat weakly up was the suspense mitigated.

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"Feel better, little girl?" the old Admiral asked, and the others pressed forward with solicitous inquiries.

She looked at them for a moment, regained her mental control, and answered, "Yes, I'm all right now; but don't mind me. What of the plate?"

They smiled at one another as it dawned upon them that the plate had been forgotten. It was manifestly unfair that she of all others should not share with them the first knowledge of what had been accomplished; so as a guard of honor they supported her back to where the cruel agent stood, and then one and all started back with exclamations of amazement.

The plate on which they were building their hopes had disappeared! Where the insulated tank which held it had reared its squatty length was now a ragged hole in the floor, bordered by the slivered ends of twisted and shattered wood, and beneath this was a yawning hole several feet deep, broken electric wires, and the great slab of metal.

Norma, as if the excitement of the discovery had acted as a tonic, released herself from the supporting arms, walked to the shining brass structure, and leaned against it. Brockton pulled off his cap and scratched his head in a puzzled way, and Jenkins removed the glasses from his nose and began nervously polishing them. The other

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engineers gaped at each other, at the inventor, and then back to the hole, wherein to all appearances was buried the thing on which they had built all their hope. "Old Bill" Roberts stood by its edges, looking down and examining the broken wires, a picture of perplexity or despair. He came back and crowded through their midst, examining a connection and tracing out one of the strands, and then stood in listless attitude, his brows drawn into a frown, and his arms hanging loose and pendulous from his shoulders. The time stretched into minutes, and Jenkins and Norma began a discussion, to which the others listened, striving to understand the phraseology of electrical science, of which many of them had little more than the layman's knowledge. Suddenly a sharp cry came from the inventor.

They looked to the other side of the room, whither he had retreated, and beheld him jumping up and down like a madman. His fists were clenched and thrust into the air, where they opened clawlike and waved a tremolo of excitement. "I've got it!" he screamed. "I've solved it!"

They drew back from him, fearing that failure had loosened his brain; but he rushed through the group, excitedly calling for men to repair the break. The Admiral, unused to his periods of enthusiasm, stared at him blankly, his lower jaw un-

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consciously dropping until his mouth yawned in cavernous suspense. In his mind nothing but insanity could account for this outburst.

Norma, on the other hand, laid a restraining hand on his arm and said, "Father, what's the matter? What is it?"

"We've been working in the dark!" he answered vehemently, and then with the jubilation of a boy but in a calmer tone continued, "By an accident we have discovered powers in our combination of electricity and metallurgy that we have not dreamed of, and which, if we can control them, make the resistant armor we came down here to manufacture as useless as a wooden hull!"

The Admiral suddenly dropped his bulk to a stool. "Good God!" he gasped, "are you mad?"

Norma, like one from whose eyes a hoodwink has been suddenly removed, and appearing almost to have read her father's mind, put her hand out to his shoulder and looked at him searchingly. A slow grin of great exultation swept over the lean old face into which she peered, drove the wrinkles into the corners of the eyes, and a mass of radiating furrows round the mouth.

"You've guessed it," he said, and then turned to the Admiral. "Brockton, you don't know what that hole meant; but in an hour from now I'm going to show you. That is, Norma, my assistant, and I will."

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Then in a sudden frenzy for work he asked them all to leave until he sent for them, and they, wondering and speculating on his next endeavor, obeyed. Only the workmen, who had descended into the cavity and were preparing to hoist the plate and mold, and the Admiral, by special invitation, remained. The clang of hammers resounded hollowly through the room as the timbers beneath the floor were shored up by the carpenters; then came the setting of another and larger tank than the one which had been so unexpectedly driven into the earth. The smaller plates which had been intended only for experimental purposes were exhausted, and therefore they had nothing on which to operate save two immense castings weighing many tons. Wide sliding doors rolled back, and workmen from the foundry, with straining muscles and clinging toes, slowly pushed in low wheeled cars on which rested the huge pieces of metal. A steel crane projected its ungainly arm, reached slowly down, and in a Titanic grasp picked up one piece, moved it into position over the new bed, and deposited it in a great basin whose material indicated that it would be able to withstand any heat.

The Admiral in boyish exuberance would have thrown wide the door; but the inventor, remembering the other contretemps, forbade. The latter busied himself for a few minutes in his storehouse, and returned with a sheet of peculiar insulation

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which was of his own invention, almost indestructible by heat, and a resistant to any form of radio-activity, which he placed with great care on top of the huge plate. The second plate was lowered squarely on top of this, clamped for additional security, and the workmen dismissed. The connections were made in identically the same way as in the previous test, except that one electrical apparatus was attached to the upper plate above the insulation and the other to the one beneath. Brockton, seeing that the currents were about to be applied, backed off into the corner, until stopped by the farthestmost partition.

"It's all right this time," the inventor assured him. "Wild current and wet floor before, badly insulated handle too. All fixed up now. Won't be any accident this time," and so on, making the final inspection of his apparatus as he talked. Norma reviewed her father's work, to be certain that all was well, and then at a nod from him took her station at that other monster which had not been used hitherto. There was a simultaneous movement on their part, and, as if suddenly endowed with a soul, the lights once more flashed here and there, glaring at them with sinister contempt—Frankensteins under control!

The Admiral, fascinated by the mystery of science, stared at the white haired old man who was calmly watching his play of colors, and then

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at the girl who with equal self possession and coolness manipulated the strange currents beneath her hands. They were animated as by one mind, throwing their levers and switches to and fro at identically the same moment without looking at each other, and the click of the closing currents came in unison. Not until then did they step back from their stations and interchange what seemed to the Admiral mutual glances of congratulation.

"That assistant of mine is a wonder!" was all the old man said as he came over, dragged a stool up beside that on which the officer sat, and gleefully rubbed his hands together. "She thinks more clearly than I do."

Brockton, who had been tense as a violin string and had almost forgotten to breathe, drew a long breath and looked at the girl, who had been leaning against the wall as though exhausted, but was now watching the slowly cooling metal. He would have asked questions; but the inventor turned to him and with an air of triumph said:

"I wish you would invite back all those who were here when we made the first test. Then you will have the explanation unless I am again mistaken."

The Admiral obeyed, and even as the cooling sprays were sifting over the great pieces of metal

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they came trooping in from the work which they had resumed. There were men from the draughting rooms, with pencils behind their ears, engineers from the outside with shirt sleeves rolled up and forgotten diagrams under their arms, and one man came from the laboratory absentmindedly carrying a test tube, balancing it so that he might spill none of the liquid which it contained. Norma was now resting calmly against one of the huge dead machines.

In a tone of unusual gravity Roberts addressed them. "Boys," he began,—they were all boys to him,—“you have witnessed the accidental discovery, I believe, of the most powerful force the world has ever known. You have been fortunate. In more than seventy years of life I, who have spent the time in strange studies and stranger work, have had no privilege so great. You have all been kind to my daughter and to me, and I am glad you are here now.” He paused for a moment, seeing with introspective eyes all the great events of his life. Then, recalling himself from this review, he turned to Jenkins as a kindred spirit, and to a boyish officer who stood near at hand.

“You two,” he said, indicating them with his hand, “may have the honor of picking up those plates.”

There was an instant of breathless astonishment.

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Jenkins was the first to recover, and unhesitatingly walked forward. The younger man drew back as though he had received an order from an insane man consigning him to inglorious death. The voice of the Admiral put an end to the wait.

"Go ahead!" he said quietly. "Those plates may weigh tons; but if Dr. Roberts tells you to pick them up, you go and try it."

With the absolute precision of training the officer's heels came together and his hand to his cap in quick salute. He strode to the plates, and stood opposite Jenkins, while the spectators craned forward, speculating as to what freak of madness was to be demonstrated. Jenkins, grave and unquestioning, looked across at his companion, nodded to him, and together they stooped and caught a handhold. Together they gathered their muscles as if for some prodigious exercise of strength, and simultaneously strained upward.

To the amazement of those within the room the great masses of metal came up with such ease that they were lifted breast high without perceptible effort.

"Higher, higher!" called the old inventor, springing toward them and gesturing with his hands. The plates rose until they were held with finger tips, and breathless suspense enchained the spectators.

"Now stand from under! Let go of them! Let

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go of them!" yelled Roberts, dancing up and down in excitement; but the men still held on as if rendered powerless by astonishment.

"Stand from under!" commanded the Admiral; and discipline again mastering them they obeyed, springing back in the apprehension that the two immense plates might by some necromancy come crashing down and disappear through the floor. With something almost like a sob, so great had been his mental strain, Jenkins stood transfixed. The Admiral gave a gasp, and with one hand poised in the air stood like a statue. A hammer fell from the hand of one of the engineers standing behind, and the man who had been tightly clutching the test tube opened his fingers and let it crash to the floor. In this tinkling sound of broken glass on cement, another gave a sharp ejaculation and took an involuntary step forward.

They had witnessed the first positive exhibition of true levitation, a solid body suspended in the air without support. They had seen in times past with complacency, knowing that it was dependent upon optical illusion, the conjurer's trick, mystifying to the outward sense but readily explainable in the light of investigation; but here before them, beyond the range of charlatanry, in perversion of all known physical laws, there hung motionless in the air, dependent upon itself for its flotation, a great mass of metal that but a short time before

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would have been beyond the power of their combined strength to lift.

And standing placidly beneath it, enjoying their surprise and supremely triumphant, stood a quiet little old man smiling up at his daughter, whose hand he was holding.

CHAPTER IV

AN INVINCIBLE ARM



HE officers, still doubting their senses, stood before this uncanny manifestation like men in a world of unreality. From without, for some unaccountable reason, the varied clamor of industry had subsided to silence, and the soldiers' song was finished. Even the yellow light of the afternoon which filtered through the window panes appeared strange, spectral, and unearthly. In the shadow of that massive thing which hovered above them, Nature seemed bent on the revocation of her laws, and for an instant their senses reeled in the struggle for comprehension.

"Old Bill" Roberts broke the spell. He reached up and touched the tip of a finger to the mass and moved it gently toward them with no more exertion than would be necessary to push a toy balloon. There was no levity in him when he addressed them, but rather the simple grandeur of one who had wrested from Nature one of her greatest powers, and was now preparing to harness

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it for all time, a slave to peace, progress, and the welfare of his fellows.

“My friends,” he said, “by the discovery of an alloy of metal and metalloids we have created a new substance, which when an electrical current of certain potentiality is passed through it becomes intensely radioactive; infinitely more so than radium. Through these machines,” and here he waved his hand at the twin apparatus in the rear, “my daughter and I have produced electrical manifestations hitherto unsuspected and unknown. The metal itself, while radioactive to a certain degree, does not become intensely so without the application of the excitant current.” He pulled the plate down till it rested on the floor, and stood upon it, while they, still awed, waited for his further exposition.

“This morning, by an accidental contact which lasted until the plate had torn itself loose and broken the current, I saw to the full the possibilities it contained. The impact of the emanations, or radioactive corpuscles, against the sheet of insulation and tank at the bottom drove it through the floor and into the ground, because the corpuscles which flew off in the other direction were unimpeded, free, and harmless. Had the excitant current been maintained, the plate would have hurled itself indefinitely toward the center of the earth.”

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The officers gave a gasp of something almost approaching incredulity, with the exception of Jenkins, who nodded his head and excitedly rubbed his hands.

Roberts picked up a scrap at his feet and held it toward them. "For years I experimented upon and perfected this," he said. "It is an insulation which will pass no current of electricity, and which no known heat can destroy. To-day by accident I learned that it was also an impervious screen to radioactive emanations. In the second experiment I so charged the alloy in my lower plate that it merely offsets gravitation, and put my sheet of insular substance between; and there we have levitation. Those two plates are working against each other with nearly equal force, the balance being disturbed only in ratio to gravitation."

"The solution of the flying machine!" Jenkins shouted excitedly, and Roberts, appreciating the engineer's quick understanding, smiled and responded:

"Yes, just that."

"But what will furnish its propulsion?" asked Jenkins, whose mind was traveling over the possibilities of rapid flight. The others evinced their interest by craning forward.

"It will furnish its own," the scientist answered, "because by the use of the apparatus behind it we can excite its radioactivity to any degree that

might be safe. More plainly, the moment the current excites and therefore increases the power of the lower plate, a lifting energy could be exerted which would destroy the equilibrium of levitation and drive the plates into the air with a force corresponding to the strength or character of the current. Or, on the other hand, if the upper plate was similarly excited, thus liberating its corpuscles, the plate would be driven toward the earth."

The Admiral, who had been slowly following this dissertation, seemed suddenly to have grasped its entire meaning, and thrust himself out from the group with both hands extended and gesticulating rapidly. "Then all you have to do," he said, "is to put on either end of your airship a freeboard made of this metal, capable of excitation and insulated on its inner surface, and you would thereby be able to drive your craft in either direction at any speed you might wish!"

"That's it exactly," answered Roberts and Jenkins in unison. The inventor continued:

"I can beat a freeboard, however, because I shall apply my electrical current in such a way as to send all the corpuscles of radioactive matter in any direction I may choose. I could with this alloy even create magnets of unknown power. I can build a craft in sections where magnets and radioactive surfaces will alternate."

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He was growing excited as the magnitude of the scope of his discovery dawned upon his imagination. Norma calmed him down; but the Admiral, infected with these visions, took up the strain and enthusiastically expatiated to his companions. To him the skies were already filled with flying ships that were to swoop down over an enemy, drop terrific bombs of high explosives, and thus sweep the seas. But future events, he was to learn, cannot be predicted with certainty.

"Well, well!" he said briskly. "What next?"

"Your engineers must assist me in drawing plans. We shall want great quantities of new material and electrical equipment, and must have them soon; because when we get well under way we should be able to create two or three of these radioplanes each day."

The great plates were locked in, and the group repaired to one of the offices, where for hours the inventor elaborated his scheme of control, the mechanical means of which were to be worked out and drawings made by the engineers. And as they toiled over their plans, there spread from mouth to mouth throughout the strange colony the story of the marvelous conception, until even the most prosaic workman found himself dreaming and speculating over his task. Before dusk had crowded the light from the skies, the Columbia,

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under a full head of steam, picked her way out to meet the ocean swells, and headed for Miami, where she was to send a message to Washington, calling for strangely assorted supplies and notifying the anxious naval men that the dry dock would not be needed.

There where the heart of the American Government beat was nothing but anxiety and suspense. Each succeeding day's events had made it more certain that Japan would force the issue to war, and, like an athlete, was stripping and training for the fight. The men who had taken upon themselves the tremendous responsibility of intrusting the nation's defense to a single discovery, and were backing it with funds for which they must account some day, saw the days slipping by, and grimly realized that they were irrevocably bound to the success or failure on the key. It was too late now to attempt other projects, and glory or defeat hung suspended on the issue.

No reports had been received, and no news had come from that determined little army that had sailed away to the South. Hence it was with something of a shock that the first word received was to the effect that the dry dock could not be utilized. It seemed like the first dread handwriting emblazoned on the wall, foretelling failure, disaster, disgrace, and war, and the President as

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he read it quoted with inexpressible sadness, "*Mene, Mene, Tekel—*" and his half opened lips framed the rest.

Then followed the requisition for supplies, and once again before any detailed report had been received came another demand. The island in the solitude seemed an insatiable monster, devouring national funds and giving back nothing in return. More days went by, bringing nothing save distressing stories from the Orient, where a clash had taken place at Chemulpo between Japanese sailors and American marines. This was of such serious nature that apologies were tendered the Japanese Embassy, and then from the entire country burst a storm of protest and reiterated criticisms of the administration, which was contumaciously accused of showing the white feather. From the western coast came appeal on appeal, the whole Pacific seaboard calling attention to its unprotected state and the imminence of its danger.

Distressed and irate at the dearth of information, the Secretary of the Navy was on the point of sending a message to Brockton demanding news, when he received from Miami the terse message that in two nights more the Admiral would report in person. That he bore nothing but a tale of disappointment was surmised from the closing words of the Admiral, who requested that all those who had been party to the project should assemble

secretly as before at the White House after nightfall.

Haggard and worn, they came together, read the brief dispatch, and waited. The President, his melancholy face set and grave, looked at them from cavernous eyes; but could offer no consolation. There was nothing to do but wait—sit and wait—for that messenger of ill omen who was to sound the knell of hope and tell what letters had been combined to spell the word “failure.” In hushed voices they discussed the situation, and tried to evolve some project for its alleviation.

And then without preliminary announcement the door swung open under the hand of the President’s private secretary, and there stood framed in it the huge form of the Admiral, his hand at salute, his eyes shining in triumph, and back of him stood Norma, her father, and Jenkins. Brockton advanced to the President’s desk, and faced him and the Secretary of the Navy.

“I have come to deliver my report in person, and with me are those who have given this nation the greatest engine of war that science has ever known.”

The room was electrified; but the President sprang to his feet and threw up a restraining hand commanding silence.

“Well?” he queried, inviting further words; but Brockton’s place had been taken by the shriv-

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eled figure of a diminutive old man, who put a trembling hand out to his friend and in a voice of affection, hushed but exultant, exclaimed:

“Paul, Paul, we’ve made good!”

The other’s hand came out to meet his, and the only sound heard was the President’s fervent, “Thank God! Thank God!”

The gates of repression and emotion were down. These men had been tried to the breaking point, and now, when in one moment their skies had cleared, they gave way. They hugged each other, repeatedly shook hands, and in the eyes of some there were unrestrained tears. They crowded round the little group from the key and admonished each other to silence.

“Gentlemen,” said the inventor, “we have rendered warships useless. We need no armor! Increased speed on the waters is of no value to us. We have created a machine that flies, not a thing of gas, of planes, or a kite. We cannot explain here as well as if you were to go with us and see it, and what use we have made of your money.”

The Secretary of the Navy looked disappointed. His mind was too intensely practical to jump to happy conclusions. “Can a flying machine whip a battleship?” he asked, and would have continued; but the Admiral brought his fist down on the desk with a mighty bang.

“This one alone might do it! The others we’ll

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have ready before they are called upon can whip the world." He stopped as if abashed by his own enthusiasm and lack of etiquette, looked at the President and the secretary apologetically, and then in a less tempestuous voice went on: "All we ask is that you come with us,—so no one may see you, of course,—and then you'll have no cause for complaint."

His request was reasonable; but they were curious. After brief discussion and arrangement they decided to go in motor cars, which many of those present knew how to drive, and within half an hour the entire party was whirling away through the side streets of the city, out into the residence sections, through long avenues of trees, past suburban homes, and finally to their destination.

The night was lighted only by the stars, which failed to disclose that strange monster of marvelous metal and unprecedented power, which loomed up dimly before them in the field. It stood there on the stubble, dark and inert, massive and without grace, like some gigantic turtle of a prehistoric age. Sentries halted them as they approached even as in time of strife, and compelled them to expose their identity. They went aboard while the Admiral stood at the door waiting for the guard to come within, the last one explaining a slight delay by saying he thought for a moment

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that he had heard a noise as of some one creeping over the field, but had found nothing.

“Sorry we can’t illuminate,” the inventor explained; “but we shall a little later after you have seen how it works.”

Jenkins threw a lever, and the heavy doors over the port came to with a dull metallic clang and were clasped.

Within a little hooded space forward a dim light exposed great banks of levers, switches, and dials, and by its faint rays they found seats improvised for the occasion. Roberts threw out a hand, and the hum of great dynamos told that machinery had been set in motion. Back of them, in another apartment so closely screened that no streak of light might expose their presence to the outside world, they saw Jenkins and a junior engineer watching the play of the wheels. Norma took her place beside her father. They felt vibrant shocks as the great airship throbbed and quivered, and then, save for the song of the machinery, all was serenely quiet and motionless. There was no sensation whatever, and they began vaguely to wonder when the flight was to take place, if that was the intention of their hosts. The voice of the Admiral, pent with elation, called:

“Mr. President and gentlemen, if you will all lean over back of you and look down, you may see something.”

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They obeyed with a promptness that suggested some nerve strain, and saw that they had been seated over broad glass plates of great thickness, while far below was an unanticipated picture. They had left the earth with that first preliminary jar, and now saw on its surface, pricked out by the lights, the streets of the national capital. They were already a mile above it and rapidly gaining higher altitudes, the horizon where other lights shone in the far distance expanding saucer like while they gazed. The sea, with here and there a slow moving ship, came before their vision, and a little dotting of fire exposed a railway train crawling along on its journey. It was as if the earth had fallen away into space and they alone were in a position of security and solidity.

"We shall require four hours of your time at least," the Admiral called, and with starts of surprise they looked to where he stood outlined against the light of the hoods, finding it hard to realize that they were not addressed by a being of another world. The officer leaned over to the Secretary of the Navy and added, "I am going to give you our preliminary report, which will save writing it."

Sessions made no reply, but turned to his interrupted scrutiny of the panorama on which the others were intent once more.

They were being lifted higher and higher, and

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in this recession of the earth, its lights, which only a few moments before had been far apart, now appeared as spangles on a vast field of black. Above them through a transparency in the roof the stars in the clarity of the rarefied atmosphere gleamed brighter, throwing outward into the pall long scintillating arrows of fire. The strange creation of an abnormal old man and his daughter, the Magic Carpet of fable realized, swept upward into the dome of the sky, veering outward over the silent reaches of the ocean, and then, like a great auk in homing flight, swung off in a wide tangent toward the southwestern void, carrying them at a speed which they could not reckon. Below was nothing more to claim their attention; so, silent and spellbound, they turned to discover what they might within this shell of mystery.

Forward, where the hood was glowing dimly, they saw the inventor standing calmly attentive to his task and scanning the faces of indicators before him, some of which they conceived must tell of altitudes, direction, or forces under subjection. In the glare immediately before him, bringing out his face in Rembrandtesque relief, he seemed a patriarch whose superior knowledge had elevated him above the common paths of men and placed him on such an exalted plane of intelligence that he was beyond a standard of comparison.

The consciousness that they were far above the

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traveled paths of all time lost its terrifying sense of strangeness and uncertainty, and they learned to trust this structure of metal whose great enlivened masses, entrained with machinery, was hurtling with them through the night. The noise within was not sufficient to prevent easy conversation; but they sat as men stricken dumb, being carried away into captivity by some dread magician of more singular power than was ever portrayed in Persian tales.

"Stand clear of the shutters, gentlemen!" the scientist called, turning his face in their direction, and they leaned forward just as Norma pressed a button. A sharp clashing noise smote their ears, and when next they looked at the ports they were shut off by metallic slides. Again the girl touched a button, and instantly the interior of the radio-plane was flooded with silvery light. It was a disappointment, for sight gave no elucidation of the secret.

A low roof of unpainted metal arched above them. In one end were ordinary electrical dynamos, a motor, and a polished electrical apparatus which they could not understand, and beyond this, outside the hoods, there was nothing whatever; only the signs of hurried work, rough, unpainted, and unpaneled. Rude benches, evidently placed for this occasion only, comprised all the trappings and furnishings of this monster that was the van-

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guard of modern transportation, and in whose keeping rested the nation's strength. They had expected intricacies of construction; but before them was simplicity. They had pictured strange manifestations of electrical science; but only a compact mass of brass rods and gleaming tubes was visible. The Admiral read their unworded curiosity.

"I can't explain it quite," he said. "Doctor Roberts will tell you all about it pretty soon, when he can get away from piloting the ship. Look out for the shutters again. Norma is going to open them and shut off the lights. We are at our journey's end."

A clash, a flash, and again they were in darkness, and with one accord they turned to the reopened ports.

Beneath them now glittered the arc lights of the plant on the lonely island which they had peopled. The great blast furnace was spouting toward them showers of glowing sparks and sheets of writhing flame, and before it, dwarfed by height into squatty gnomes, were those who incessantly fed it. The windows of the machine shops were limned in squares of white, and out to one side, throwing its searchlight to and fro, there steamed a gunboat, while afar on the other boundary of the key its sister ship kept equally vigilant patrol. Industry was spread before them—industry betokening that

AN INVINCIBLE ARM

night and day were being devoted to the country's need; telling through the hum of wheels and the roaring of the blast that the eagle from his lone aerie was sharpening his talons for the impending struggle, and preparing for a resistless flight into the red sun of war.

Dumfounded and unable to comprehend that in so short a time they had been transported a distance which by all known methods would have taken a couple of days to traverse, they stared at the scene opening to their view, and while this bewilderment continued the radioplane began a rapid descent in wide, sweeping circles, daintily picked out an open spot immediately in front of the plant, and gently came to rest.

CHAPTER V

TO MEET THE ENEMY



GREAT ribbon of light from the watchful Columbia perforated the night, and as they emerged from the flying monster they discovered in this flaming pathway of white a line of shells similar to that which had conveyed them to the island. From the one nearest came the steady, resounding beat of hammers and the voices of men who were equipping it within, preparatory to transforming the dead, inactive mass of metal into a thing of ebullient life and incredible activity.

“Completing them at the rate of two a day now, gentlemen,” informed Brockton, as he led the party toward the machine shop, which was the nearest building. And this they were to learn was the story of the camp: Accomplishment, accomplishment—everything sacrificed to accomplishment! There was no recess from industry when they entered the shedlike building, and go where they would they saw nothing but men working like mad, who merely looked up from

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their occupations, saluted, and then resumed their tasks as though the President of the United States and his most eminent advisers were not of sufficient importance to excuse delay. Here was a little army of men, expert in their several lines, comprehending the necessity for haste, and imbued with only one idea: That their efforts were for their country. Soldiers were they who in other times would have shut their jaws and grimly stormed through shot and shell; but were now doing no less valiant acts when with every turn of a wheel or every blow of a hammer they threw mind, muscle, and heart into the uprearing of the nation's defense.

The President in a reverie found himself contemplating them. Here, he thought, was the personification of that anomaly the American working man: oftentimes turbulent, frequently dissatisfied, sometimes waging warfare with employer and capital and cursing political parties; but when country and home were endangered, courageous as a lion guarding whelps, reckless of life, and unheeding wounds, plunging to the front in a frenzy, and asking no reward save the satisfaction of seizing the invader by the throat and throttling him to the death. "God save the enemy who underestimates the temper and patriotism of the American workman!" he muttered as he returned to the long motionless line of radioplanes.

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The ray of light, broad, steady, and clear, was still there, and as the visitors entered its borders the quick, sharp blast of a whistle in the rear, as if by preconcerted signal, caused every wheel to come to an abrupt stop. From the buildings and quarters men came running to the scene and surrounded the guests, who were grouped together in the fan of white and immediately in front of the monster which had given them passage. That they were not to depart without some further attention was obvious. "Old Bill" Roberts made the meaning of the call plain when he addressed his friend in the old term of intimacy:

"Paul, we have left to you the honor of christening the first radioplane ever built. She isn't named yet. The boys here wanted to call her the Roberts; but I forbade them. I guess you know who I wanted to call her after," he said, laying his hand on the President's arm and looking up into his face; "but then I wasn't sure you would like that, so we have compromised by leaving it to you."

The President had in his hand a piece of carpenter's chalk which he had idly picked up from one of the floors he had traversed. He stood turning it over between his long rough fingers which bore evidences of hard physical labor in early youth, and looked affectionately down into the inventor's eyes. He turned from him and

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looked at those around him. In the edges of the light and stretching back into the darkness behind he could discern the faces of the workmen, the reflection giving them a singularly pallid look and making them seem like visages dismembered, their bodies being absorbed into the blackness of the background. They expected a speech; but he felt a paucity of words when he thought of their endeavors and achievements. He started to address them; but choked with the fullness of his heart. Without such work as they had given, what would be the condition of the nation to-night?

"Men," he said, using the strongest of appellations, "no words of mine can add to the honors you merit, nor detract from what you have done. Duty well performed requires no praise; but as President of the United States I thank you. I am the one who is honored in being privileged to call you countrymen."

He faltered, and in the strong light upon him they could see the muscles of his face twitching with repression. He turned from them as if to hide his emotion, and took a few steps which brought him to the side of the radioplane. His long arm reached out, and slowly and in silence he chalked upon its metal side in big white letters, N-O-R-M-A.

The men of the plant stood quietly until the

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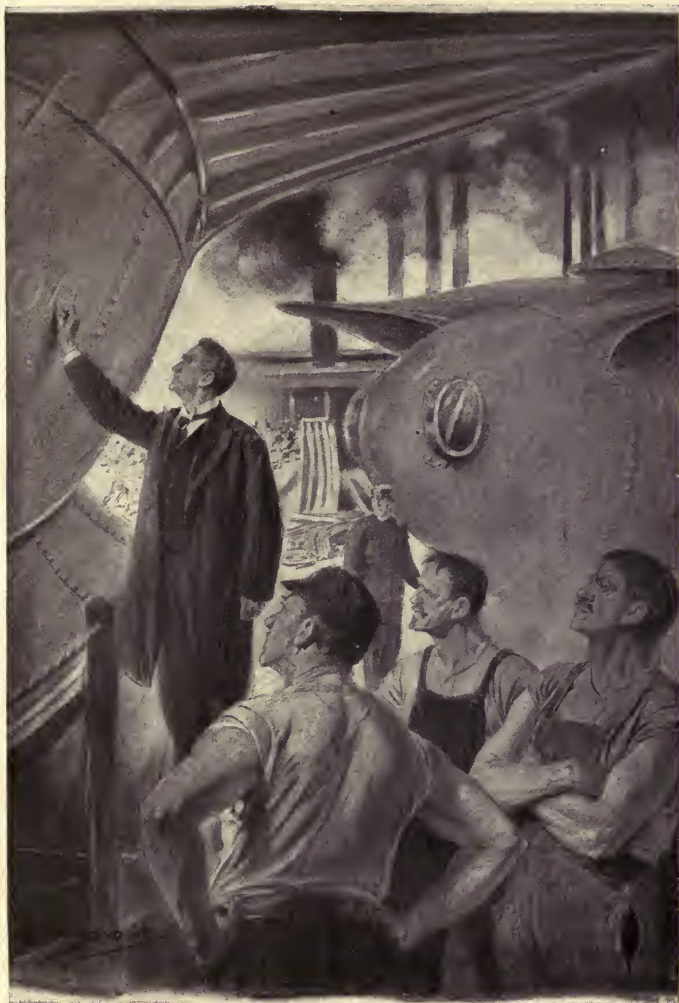
significance of his act dawned upon them, and then burst into a frenzy of cheers, forgot the dignity of his position, and crowded round him, talking as man to man. Norma tried to make her protests heard; but they were unavailing. The men were elated, and her father was satisfied.

With little delay the party boarded the craft, the President being the last to say good by. The big metal door was closed, and the Norma rose into the air for its return journey, while the men stood with hats off and watched it disappear before returning to their work.

The radioplane was making its last flight before the war, because it was deemed that all risk of discovery should be obviated, even though other methods of transportation were comparatively snaillike.

And so the months went on with activity at the key, placidity in the administration, and preparations for an onslaught on Japan. As the work of construction advanced, Norma found respite to make occasional brief visits to Washington, where her time was monopolized by Hillier, who did not dream of his forthcoming trip to London; but "Old Bill" Roberts came no more to the Capital.

Now began that series of orders which subjected the men at the head of the Government to



"Slowly and in silence he chalked . . . in big white letters,
N-O-R-M-A."



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their greatest trial. Work was stopped on all fortifications, beginning with those in the Philippines. It was accepted by the public as a foolish curtailment of expense. Before this had ceased to rankle in the public mind construction ceased in nearly all the navy yards; but the clamor then arose to such a pitch that outwardly it was resumed, being done for appearance sake only and to prevent a revolution.

So dangerous was the pitch of indignation that some of the President's advisers quailed before the show of wrath, and feared that an army of Americans might march on Washington. They besought the President to alter his plans and make broadcast announcement of the state of defense; but he, his Americanism exceeded only by his humanitarianism, stood steadfast. His answer was characteristic:

“If our secret becomes known, there will be no war, and war is a necessity for our purpose. In our hands has been given by a miracle the most deadly engine ever conceived, and we should be delinquent in our duty if we failed to use it as a means for controlling and thereby ending wars for all time. Let us bear with fortitude whatever reproaches may be heaped upon us, for we are the instruments of God, and the trial will last only a little longer. Let no man speak!”

His eyes flamed with inspiration, and, like a

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prophet of old, he led his followers in his own footsteps. In those trying times he was very near to the God in whom he believed, and only the walls of his room knew how often he appealed for light and guidance, trembling in spiritual agony, and, like the martyrs of all ages, crucified by his fellows.

Events began to move with lightning like rapidity as May approached. Secret orders had been given to all the principal ships in Pacific waters to withdraw into neutral harbors, it being the wish of the men who were playing the stern game that all possible loss of life through accidental meetings might be obviated. Pacific commerce withdrew from the western seas, believing itself unprotected and the administration mad. From all sources of information came the certain reports that Japan was about to attack. Her communications became daily more insolent; but were invariably treated with suave contempt. And then came a day which brought the most portentous news.

The first was a message from the key that Doctor Roberts had broken down. It was from Brockton, who made a pitiful appeal to the Secretary of the Navy to find Norma and either give permission for her to be brought back by a radio-plane, or to have her sent at once by special train to Miami, inasmuch as she, being the sole sharer

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of her father's secret, was now the only one who could be depended upon for the metamorphosis of the plates. The message added that the inventor was not in a serious condition, but that overwork, overstudy, and overstrain had so taken toll that the surgeons declared he was coming down with brain fever and that his very life depended on his taking absolute rest.

To hazard another trip of a radioplane was out of the question, because the administration was aware that spies were still in the Capital. The President himself sent messengers to find the girl on whom so much depended, only to learn at a late hour that she had not yet reached Washington, but was expected to arrive that night. He preferred to communicate his tidings to her in person, and therefore left word that she should call at the White House the following morning. In the meantime advance preparations were made for her conveyance to the island, together with the grim old fighting Admiral, Bevins, who was now to assume command of the aërial forces of America, and those officers who from time to time had been called home from various ships.

And then, when night fell and the President's cup seemed full, came the swift and unexpected announcement that the Japanese had fallen upon the Philippines. War was on, and the long expected gauntlet lay in the lists, while the nation

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heaved and rocked in turmoil, quivered with insult, and cried aloud for vengeance.

When Norma appeared at the White House she was told of her father's condition by the President himself, who was plainly harassed to the limit by anxiety.

"You can go at once," he said; "but what then? Are there any who can work the radio-planes?"

"Yes, by nightly flights we have trained crews for all and more than we have built."

"But there should be some expert guiding mind who knows the secret of the craft."

"Father had intended to accompany them and himself direct the leading radioplane in case of attack."

The President threw up his hand in a gesture of hopelessness. The time for attack was fast approaching, and could not be postponed on account of the inventor's illness. Norma, who had been standing beside a window, confronted the worried head of the nation.

"You forget," she said, "that I have youth, strength, will, and knowledge. Neither my father's nor my country's cause shall suffer."

He walked across the room, towering above her in ungainly strength, took both her hands in his, and looked deeply into her eyes. "You mean——"

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"That if my father is too ill to go, I myself will fight the Japanese. I myself will give what expert advice is needed, and will demonstrate to the others what must be done in battle." Inflamed by the thought of what was dependent upon her, pride in her father, and Americanism, she was ready to accept the responsibility, even though it might cost her life.

They stood in silence, holding each other's hands. He stooped over her, his sad eyes filled with an admiration which was akin to veneration, and kissed her.

"Joan of Arc! Joan of Arc!" he whispered, and said no more.

She had been told that a train awaited. Together they walked to the door of the President's study through the halls, and to the outer portal. Unheeding those who were near, he caught her hand and held it to his breast, looking once more into her eyes.

"God bless and keep you, my child!" he said, and abruptly turned back to his seclusion, his head dropped forward between his massive shoulders and his arms swinging loosely at his sides.

The day was not yet done, and before the next had dawned came the announcement that the Hawaiian islands had also been surrendered to the foe. The coterie of men within the secret held their meeting and congratulated each other that

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orders had been obeyed, no defense made, and loss of life obviated. But the public must be pacified. The swift convening of Congress, its authorization of the administration to act, and the appeasing notice to the public that a well defined policy was being pursued, followed one after the other, but still were not understood.

Night and day now the President and his associates toiled and planned. Report after report came to them, until they knew that the hour to act had come. The spell of seeming lethargy was at an end, and with unprecedented swiftness the cordon was thrown round the nation, its ports closed, and its communication shut off save through channels of the secret service, which was intensely active.

Time was computed to the minute, and when the fleet of conquest sailed from Japan the very latitude and longitude of the point where it was to be met were communicated to the headquarters in Florida, where had been renewed energy.

Hence it was that, as darkness once more mantled that isolated spot, a strange scene was witnessed. It was the departure of that invincible squadron of the air for the scene of battle. Night after night they had maneuvered, till those who manned them were masters of their craft and of the new form of signals which were to be used in case of emergency. Every detail was complete,

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every possible precaution was taken to avert accident.

And what a difference there was between this fleet and those to which the men aboard were accustomed! On those battleships of the seas were magnificent forces of men trained to fight, which were numbered by thousands; but here each crew consisted of a bare half-dozen. In the hulls of those vessels of the sea strove a small army, watching over and driving huge engines, and supplying them with steam; here were only one man and an assistant standing before levers, switches, and buttons, which did their work instantaneously and with no noise. In those destroyers of the waters throbbed mighty engines considered the modern triumph of speed; here was a craft that by a finger's pressure could almost run abreast the sun. Those ships bristled with mighty guns; here were no frowning muzzles or unwieldy turrets. Science was bringing an end to brute force, and the last battle against barbarism was at hand.

For the first time since its birth, the great plant was silent and idle, and the men who had created it and by its means built this new fleet of the air were at rest. They had done all they could, and now gathered silently round the radioplanes, which stood in orderly array with portlike doors yawning wide to receive their crews. "Fight-

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ing" Bevins stood by his flagcraft, the Norma, and looked at the force under his command. Captains who had handled hundreds of men and driven their great floating crafts of steel, and engineers who had learned new callings waited attentively for his last instructions.

The battle scarred veteran addressed them in a voice that needed no high pitch to be audible to all his hearers. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have nothing more to say to you. You are going out to fight what will probably be the last great battle in history. You are active participants in the final chapter of international war. The time is approaching when our profession will be useless, and I for one shall gladly turn to ways of peace."

Norma, who had left the bedside of the sleeping inventor, joined the officers, and Bevins stopped and saluted her.

"With us," he continued, "is a girl who has laid all her talents on the altar of country, and is now prepared to jeopardize her life for victory. We can do no less. It may be that some of us will not return,—the hazards of war can never be foreseen. You have been put in a strange position, and are even robbed of the sailor's right to send a last message to your homes; but that too has been for the country's good. To my personal knowledge you have all passed your lives in try-

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ing to do what was right, and have given the best that was in you to the flag. You will do no less now."

In the glare of the arc lights he took one last look at his comrades in arms, and then, as if once more at sea, loudly ordered, "Board ship, all!"

He uncovered and stood aside in an attitude of the greatest respect while Norma passed and entered the flagship bearing her name. With steady precision the other officers saluted, took possession of their radioplanes, and as the doors clanged shut behind them a mighty cheer burst from those outside. Before it had subsided the dynamos in the strange collection were humming and droning with unleashed energy, and the unshuttered ports stared out into the gloom like eyes of fire suddenly opened from sleep.

From the Norma there shot up into the sky swiftly alternating streaks of red, white, and blue, the night signal asking if all was ready. From the other monsters came flashing answers of acquiescence. There was an instant's pause. The flagship gave a slight upward shock and lifted slowly into the air. Immediately behind in stately upward sweep followed another radioplane, and in quick succession, like gigantic birds of the night, they took flight in a great swinging circle until they reached a common altitude. The cheer below had died away, and all was still.

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Then, as if answering the call of a baton swung by a god, the palpitant air was riven by a mighty chorus from beneath. Mounting upward there penetrated to them, quivering with terrific fervor, the cry of invincibility voiced in the majestic words of that deathless song of battle:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord ;
He is trampling out the vintage where his grapes of wrath are
stored :
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword ;
His truth is marching on.

Out to the west, over sleeping cities and homes, across mountain and plain, chasing the long set sun, they went to meet the fleet of an enemy which was steadily sailing to its doom. The sword of a nation's vengeance was cleaving the night skies in its deliverance of an overwhelming blow.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE



It was in the long gray dawn of the summer morning, and the wide reaching ocean, slate colored in the early light, seemed asleep in its quietude save where it was disturbed by moving prows. Steaming across its bosom in fancied security, knowing that not on Pacific waters were there enemies capable of staying its progress, and insolently careless in superb strength, went the Japanese fleet. The huge flagship, the Ito, forced her way in advance, the apex of a great and formidable triangle, whose sides were formed by other battleships of scarcely less tonnage, graceful cruisers, and swift moving destroyers, while bringing up the far rear were the colliers in whose hulls were carried fuel for the great armada.

Here was the Kashima which could drive her seventeen thousand tons of steel through the water at nineteen knots speed; the Katori, but little smaller and almost as fast; the Asahi, the Mikasa, the Asama, the Tokiwa, and others which were dear to the heart and pride of Nippon,—a

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gallant navy, carefully planned, well constructed, and of invincible size and strength. No squadron that breasted the waves might cause it to hesitate.

In the stillness of the morning there came a sudden, sharp exclamation from the man on the lookout, an excited call to the bridge, and the quick step of an officer in answer to the summons. Almost instantly he was followed by another, who brought with him a pair of powerful binoculars, through which he gazed in the direction indicated by the sailor. There in the immeasurable void of the upper air, so high above that it floated in the broader light, soared a covey of gigantic objects unpictured in the lore of flight. Onward it came until almost above, when it stopped and majestically hovered over them, and seemed to be watching and waiting for some ray of broader light. The pallid blue of those far floating bodies rendered them almost indistinguishable, save when now and then they swung broadside to in deploying, resumed their speed, and swept round in circles.

Puzzled and amazed, the officer handed the glasses to his companion and watched his face attentively, as if hoping to read from its expression some solution of this mysterious visitation from the immense unclouded space above. The glasses were lowered, and the two men with the supersti-

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tion of ages behind them turned to each other with pallid faces, fearing the supernatural or the unknown. Again they looked, and saw that the flying specks traveled with incredible rapidity and were apparently observing them, after which, as they watched, they saw them come to an abrupt stop. It was enough. Whatever they were, their presence would be made known.

The officers sprang to the alarms, and in an instant thunderous volleys bellowed out across the waters, awakening the other vessels. Shrill pipings, the staccato blare of bugles, and the sound of running feet told the story of excitement and that well drilled crews were answering the call. The hour was early for the perfect use of flag signals; so from one warship to another flashed the searchlight warnings, and wireless operators in their cabins ticked frantic messages to outlying members of the fleet to close in for action. Admirals and Captains, who had fought successfully in other wars and counted their service as valuable adjuncts in any engagement, stood upon the bridges or the flanks of the great turrets and stared spellbound at this apparition which had come upon them in the night. There it was, a silent fleet of the air, sinister and menacing, lowering over them as if waiting opportunity or bidding its time to strike.

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A sudden evolution brought one of those terrible adversaries to the outer edge of the aerial formation, and through their glasses they saw thrown out to the winds of the morning, whipping and writhing, the flag of the nation they had come to conquer; the oldest banner in the world, and the one they had been taught through months of consideration to despise. Stars on a field of blue, fit emblem for warriors of the clouds! And then ere the first flag had straightened out its heavy folds, the colors fluttered from each birdlike craft, a challenge to battle in which the odds were against them.

Aloft in that fleet of the air, where all was quiet, there was no sudden call of excitement. For hours they had watched and waited for the appearance of the enemy, and when he was sighted far below in the murk of the dawn each man took his post without words; but the martial spirit which sends men to battle burned clear and high. The supreme test was at hand, and the wait and preparation were at an end. The issue was in the lap of the gods.

The Norma had been the first to descry the oncoming fleet, and Fighting Bevins with his own hand had signaled his followers to reduce speed. Now he stood at the transparent ports, heard the sudden booming alarm, witnessed the excitement on the decks, and smiled with grim joy. By his

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side stood Norma, and not even he, trained to strife and accustomed from early manhood to scenes of carnage, was more cool or determined. He looked at her questioningly, wondering whether or no he should read in her eyes a sign of regret or weakness, and turned from her with a glow of admiration.

"Who is going to handle her?" he queried, glancing at the hood.

"I am," she replied as quietly as if answering a query of no moment.

He held out his hand and shook hers warmly.

From away in the outer distance, where the angle was not too sharp to prevent its elevation, came the sullen report of a gun, and a shell flew past at such close range that its screaming came to them through the thickness of their plate and the open upper ports, sounding its challenge and defiance above the droning hum of the dynamos. The girl glanced apprehensively upward, but the Admiral continued his calm inspection of the Japanese fleet.

Again from a vessel closer at hand came a series of short sharp reports. The radioplane felt a shivering impact, and careened slightly in answer to its force. The Admiral was hurled against her metal side, and one of the engineers seized a rail to prevent being thrown headlong against the machinery.

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"They're trying four-inch shells on us! are they?" shouted Bevins. "Well, we'll put an end to that right now!"

He sprang to the signal box, and Norma, reading his intention, hurried to her post in the hood. He ordered the other craft to increase speed and traverse circles till he should notify them which war vessels of the fleet beneath were to be their individual prey. Now the small shells were fairly rending the air around them. The sharp clang of metal against metal and quick explosion told that hits were being made, and through the ports the radioplanes which suffered could be seen to rock convulsively when struck. The air seemed whining with death which was clamoring for admission to its prey. Shot and shell swept through space; but higher and higher soared the radioplanes, while the old war dog studied the formation of the fleet below.

"My God! Seventeen is hit! Seventeen is hit!" screamed the lookout, and the Admiral and Norma stared through a side port.

In long, weird, dizzy circles, like a wounded man striving to recover his balance, a radioplane was dropping slowly down toward the waters, ineffectually fighting to regain its balance. The four-inch shells had done no damage; but the far outlying cruiser had made an accidental hit with a heavy gun. Zigzagging here and there in er-

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ratic swoops the radioplane continued to plunge. From the waters below came the sounds of exultant cheering. The enemy were gaining heart. They had found what they believed to be a chance for hope and an invulnerable spot in the American's armor. Norma started back to her levers; but the Admiral called excitedly:

"Look, look! Good boy, Nineteen! Good boy!"

Again she looked through the port, and was transfixed with the daring attempt of another radioplane. Nineteen, with its big white letters blazing in the light, had taken a swift downward shoot.

"It's Jenkins! It's Jenkins!" Norma called in excitement, knowing that the little scientist was manning the hood of that craft.

Then before she could say more, Nineteen's object was made plain. The great radioplane shot to a lower altitude than that of its crippled fellow, dove here and there like a bat, caught a simultaneous speed, and rounding upward in a deft swoop poised itself firmly beneath the lower plate of Seventeen. For an instant the two, locked together and overweighted, slid slowly downward through the air, and then Nineteen seemed to gather itself, came to a stop, hesitated for a moment, and began a steady upward movement.

As if divining its purpose, two other radioplanes

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swooped down toward the stricken monster till their sides touched, and then like a group of warriors carrying a wounded comrade from the field, assisted the ascent into the upper void. Focusing their fire on the group, the Japanese made it a target, and the scream of shot and shell broke into a pandemonium until the air around was churned as by a demon's wrath.

Up—up they went till they were mere specks against the dome of the heavens, where they were beyond range and in the profound silence of solitude. The others of the fleet, led by the *Norma*, hastened to soar toward them; but before they could get within speaking distance the wireless brought to all radioplanes this message:

“Seventeen was struck by a ten-inch shell directly below her dynamos. The jar caused a temporary break which cut off the current for a short time. This is nearly repaired. No damage of consequence has been done, and she will report for duty within two minutes.”

Bevins and *Norma* looked at each other with a great relief. “Thank God for that!” the Admiral said, and it was echoed by his subordinate.

They turned again to the port, and as they did so they saw the specks above disintegrate, and in a few moments Seventeen, repaired, and again capable, was in line of battle. The cheering below ceased; but from the doomed battleships and

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cruisers a continuous hail of ineffectual shots were fired, while the Admiral of the aërial fleet, his plans formed, was calmly sending orders.

“Number One will engage the cruiser on the extreme right. Two will attack the battleship on the port bow of the flagship. Three will take the battleship on the extreme left,” and so on, ending with the declaration that the Norma would open the engagement by striking the Ito at the head of the triangle.

Fighting Bevins turned away from his signal box when the last confirmation of his instructions had been received and looked at the girl in the hood. At that high altitude the early rays of the sun were shivering the gloom of the interior through the glass ports in the dome. As if in a glory of silver she stood before him, outwardly calm and emotionless; but in the splendid poise of her body, the expectant waiting of her hands, and the steady scrutiny of the dials before her, she was the embodiment of sufficiency. Feeling his look and waiting for his command, she moved her head till her face was turned full upon him, and in her eyes shone the fire which through all the ages has led valiant warriors to fields of victory. The glory of youth, the inspiration of patriotism, and the determination of fearlessness were blended in their light and exultantly waiting the battle call.

Accustomed as he was to the terrible intoxica-

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tion of fierce conflict, the gray old Admiral felt himself enthused by this slip of a girl. He was a man making the last fight of his life with the incarnation of the Goddess of War at his elbow and mutely cheering him on to the charge. Every nerve within him strung itself in tensivity, the muscles of his body seemed to contract until his head fairly shrank between his massive shoulders, his resolute jaw set with a snap, and his short hair seemed to bristle as he leaped toward her, gave way to his excitement and fairly shouted, "Now! Go to them! Quick, hard, and fast! At them!"

He jumped back to his point of observation, and even as he did so the great radioplane shivered with a surcharge of energy, reeled drunkenly through every fiber for the fraction of a second, gathered itself, and in one terrific plunge shot downward at such an awful rate of speed that the engineers by the dynamos instinctively threw themselves to the floor, the man on the lookout seized the bars before him, gasping for breath, and the Admiral, startled, whirled toward the figure in the hood, fearing that some fatal accident had occurred.

There, erect, triumphant, and fierce, stood the woman glorified who was striking the first blow for her country's honor and her father's exaltation. She was fairly hurling the machine through space, her hands grasping the levers of descent

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and her eyes on the periscope which portrayed the position of their helpless victims.

Bevins, in a fury of excitement, shouted his approval with storms of oaths, completely swept out of himself by the fierceness of the assault. "Good, good!" he shouted. "That's right! Open her up wide. They're ours! They're ours!"

Outside the hissing air was torn by a whirlwind of small shells fired in a panic stricken attempt to fend off this adversary which was driving downward upon the Ito. It was their last hope at defense. They had tested their guns repeatedly at long range, and proved them ineffectual against an enemy that could travel with a speed beside which that of the swiftest bird of prey was insignificant. They had watched those strange uncanny things lift themselves to a prodigious altitude with incomparable ease, carry away and rejuvenate a wounded companion which had been struck by the merest chance, turn toward each other as if in communication, whirl out in long lines betokening the perfection of control, had waited for a downpour of missiles; and then, when amazement at this marvelous demonstration had reached its climax, they had witnessed the sudden swoop in their direction. Now in hopeless impotence the men on the deck of the doomed Ito lost their heads and ran frantically to and fro. Up to the very last, one or two of the gun crews elevated

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and fired—elevated and fired—with methodical precision like men in a trance and actuated by habit only.

The panic stricken swallow vainly winging his way through the air in wild endeavor to escape the talons of the darting hawk would have had more chance than they before this onslaught. This gigantic embodiment of doom was leaping down upon them with such terrific velocity and at such an angle of flight as to preclude all possibility of defense. Irresistible, implacable, and noiseless, it was plunging for the final thrust. Its very method of attack was so surprising and so unexpected that they were awed with fear, helpless, benumbed, despairing, and conquered. They were men done to death and suffering the agonies of wounds before the blow had fallen. It was all accomplished with such rapidity that not even the most terrified had time to rush to the rails and throw himself into the sea. When the instant of death seemed imminent, they were paralyzed into inaction and cowered together, waiting for the shock of annihilation.

And their suspense, although of a different nature, was scarcely more keen and heartbreaking than that of those in the radioplane which was hurtling at them.

The Admiral was still crouching like a man prepared for a blow, when Norma with quick energy

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tilted over another lever and checked the descent. Those within the shell felt their hearts come back to the normal and were once more able to breathe freely. It was like the application of a powerful brake to a falling elevator, save that there was no abrupt jar, no discordant sound of steel on steel, and no shock of friction.

"Look out! Look out!" they heard her call. "Hold fast! We're going to strike!"

And then, even as they sought positions of security, the great radioplane felt a sudden, sharp concussion of impact as the top of a fighting mast struck its bottom plate, crumpled like a match, and went crashing downward, a débris of twisted, useless steel. Even within the chamber there penetrated to them the terrified shrieks and despairing cries of the men of Japan.

Another quick smashing blow almost threw those at the dynamos from their feet, more cries were heard without, and then, for the small part of a second there was silence and immobility. Even the storm of fire from the other ships had ceased.

Norma alone seemed endowed with power of movement, and sprang quickly from lever to lever and switch to switch, issuing her battle cry. "The dynamos! The dynamos!" she called. "Full speed, and stand clear for fear of accident! I've thrown the magnet currents! Quick! all

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your power before others can train a gun on us!" Her voice was sharp and decisive, and her words snapped like lashes, driving them to action. "Steady, steady!"

With almost the instantaneousness of its stop, the radioplane shivered and throbbed with increased energy. The dynamos hummed and roared, the Norma quivered like a race horse under a cruel whip, then steadied itself, seemed to gather its forces together, gave one mighty lift, and began to ascend. The frightened cries from without subsided in stupefaction.

The fighting Admiral with clenched fists was running the length of the radioplane, staring through the lower ports, and hoarsely voicing his exultation, his eyes flaming with the joy of victory.

Out on the sluggish waves which had now changed to a coldly gleaming gray the other vessels of the Japanese fleet witnessed the beginnings of catastrophe. They had seen this incredibly monstrous thing drop from the ether upon their flagship, crumple its upper works like paper, attach itself to the turrets, and then with phenomenal power actually lift from the ocean twenty thousand tons of steel,—a floating fortress believed but an hour ago to be invincible,—and bear it away. Even as they watched they saw this strange god which had grasped the pride of Japan

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in his clutch deliberately shaping his flight higher and higher into the great void of the heavens and passing out of their world.

Of what use were guns against these strange visitants, whose only human mark was the flag of the despised enemy? In hopeless screams of terror their sirens awoke the echoes with weird, despairing wails, and their engines under full speed sent the screws lashing through the water in a last desperate effort to escape by flight. And while their prows tore the waves the superstitious sailors took their disaster as an omen of heavenly wrath, reverted to the religion of their ancestors, and prostrated themselves in an agony of prayer; but every chance was denied them, and even their trust in speed to evade seizure was ineffectual.

Even as the Ito, held fast by the Norma, was becoming a speck against the disk of the morning sky, another of those strange creatures made a scarcely less abrupt descent upon the Kashima. Stacks and masts went down with a crash as had those others. The great wingless terror picked her up into the air before her engines could be stopped, and, with her screw beating the atmosphere like the fluttering fins of a fish captured by a marauding eagle, sailed off with her into the blue above.

Once more they tried the effect of gunnery, when the Katori was threatened; but it was futile,

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and, reading their doom, they waited their turn. It was not long in coming; for now by twos and threes they were torn from the ocean and lifted aloft. The colliers were the last to succumb, and their crews, realizing that the hulls alone would come in contact with the implacable demons above, ran screaming below decks to continue their supplications to the deaf gods who had deserted them.

From the thick glass of his port the Admiral looked down upon his conquered foemen and watched the precision with which his orders were being obeyed. Each time a victim was seized he shouted, "Three's done her work!" or "Good boy, Seven! You've got him!" and so on enumerating each success.

Some movement on the deck of the Ito close at hand arrested his attention. His brows came together again in a fierce scowl. "Stand by the magnet levers, Miss Norma," he commanded, "because if these fellows below mean to show the least resistance whatever, we'll drop 'em!"

She had been standing serenely in her hood, her head thrown back, reveling in the glories of triumph. When the fate of the battle had hung upon her performance, and when her own life was threatened, she had thrown herself body and soul into the fray, wide eyed, unhesitant, and without a tremor; but now, at the thought of being the

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executioner of perhaps a thousand men, her face blanched, her limbs trembled, and her hands forgot their task and clasped together in imploration. She was the woman again, ready to plead for the lives of those she had conquered.

"My God! You wouldn't do that, would you?" she said.

The old gladiator of the sea turned upon her fiercely. "Do it? Do it? I'd drop them to hell as quick as I would to the bottom of the Pacific if they show fight!" he responded. "We're out here to teach a lesson, and they deserve all that's coming to 'em! War is no child's game," he concluded grimly, "and the first ship that wants trouble goes down like a thunderbolt."

As if to emphasize his remark, he sprang to the signal box and issued this sanguinary order to every radioplane in the fleet, while Norma, faint and sick at heart, shut her teeth and with a look of inexpressible pain turned back to her levers.

But she was spared this dreadful work. The Japanese officers and men had learned the absolute futility of resistance, and doubted the efficacy of appeal. Their one hope for life now rested in the humanity and leniency of those who held them in thrall.

It took no long chain of reasoning to conclude that an enemy who could pluck them from the seas and without visible effort lift them more than

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a mile high could as readily release his hold and send them to destruction with meteorlike speed. Even were it possible to destroy those monsters which clutched them, to do so would be self annihilation.

They were ignored, cut off from those above, and divorced from the waters beneath as if they were creatures of no importance, to be treated like mere troublesome insects, exterminated or spared as their captor's whim might dictate. The glory of an easy conquest in the Philippines, the boastings which had followed the subjugation of Hawaii, the pomp and circumstance of previous conquests,—all were obliterated, all erased from the scroll of valorous deeds by an action which had lasted less than an hour. And now, like beaten legionaries chained to the victor's car, they were being carried away toward the rising sun and an unknown fate.

CHAPTER VII

THE EAGLE'S FLIGHT



O stranger spectacle was ever outlined against the sky than that of the fate laden morning, when at a height of more than three miles above the sea the Emperor's ships were borne away. A child full of life, energy, and vivacity, clutched in the inflexible talons of a merciless eagle, and hurried into the empyrean, would have been no more helpless. The sun's rays were now painting the surface of a far reaching, untenanted ocean, on whose waves no sail caught the breeze, and across whose depths sallied no squadrons. The day of its abandonment was at hand, and the time not distant when seafaring was to become merely legendary.

In the profound solitude of the upper air the radioplanes swung majestically in a wide circle, and then like a flock of geese in homeward flight formed a long line which in stately procession directed its course to the east.

The Japanese knew by the faces staring at them from the bellies of the monsters which had

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gathered them in that they were in the grasp of the enemy, and impotent, although throughout that trying day no word was addressed to them. Once, from their lofty planes of transit, they saw through their glasses a dim outline on the far southern horizon whose faint blue haze held Honolulu, designated as a stopping place, but which they were never to reach,—destined to be a port for naught but phantom ships—a port of dreams.

To them their progress through the air was at a terrifying speed, and the wind of flight sweeping in a gale across their decks drove them to shelter; but they did not know that the machines above them were working at slow strength, in order that their coming to the shores of the American continent might be unwitnessed and unheralded. The hours slipped away, until below them the shadows lengthened and deepened and the waves were no longer seen. Up in their aerial path the dusk was falling, when simultaneously they came to a halt and hung motionless in mid-air. Officers and men hurried to the decks to learn what this change might portend, and as they did so they discovered that the silent monsters were clustered in what seemed perilous proximity to the craft holding their redoubtable flagship, the Ito. On the bridge of the latter appeared the Admiral of the fleet, Kamigawa, his impassive face showing nothing to his followers of

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the strain under which he had labored during those long hours of captivity. Like his fellow officers, he looked at the assemblage, anxious to know the cause of the abrupt stop, and then aloft to the engines of victory, from each of which there whipped and cracked in the evening breeze the Stars and Stripes.

The grinding noise of metal sliding over metal attracted his attention, and almost before it had ceased a man clad in the blue uniform of the United States navy leaned out of a huge port, holding himself by his hand, and frowning down at the men upon the Ito's bridge.

"Good evening, Kamigawa!" a voice hailed with gruff resonance, and he recognized Bevins, who had been an instructor in the naval academy of the nation which had presented him with post-graduate instruction, and which he had come to assault.

"Good evening, Admiral," he responded in excellent English, mentally thankful that he had offered no greater resistance to this famous bulldog of the sea; but with no taint of shame clouding his mind in thus being recalled to the fact that he had attempted war upon a country which had helped to educate him, of which he had been a guest of honor, and to which he owed much in knowledge or seamanship.

"It gives me much pleasure," resumed the

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voice above in a tone of cold courtesy, "to request that you at once go through the formality of surrendering your entire fleet, and signal the other vessels from your flagship that in behalf of yourself and men you accept parole under the usual provision that neither you nor any of your men will bear arms against the United States during the remainder of this war."

"But I can't do that!" Kamigawa protested in a tone of bitterness.

"Very well," came the curt answer. "I shall at once drop you, and I can assure you that nothing will give me greater joy."

The blue figure with its flapping coat tails swung back toward the open port with an air of decision, and the Japanese Admiral knew that this was no time for the practice of deception and evasion. The man above was not one to be trifled with, and could be depended upon to keep his word unfalteringly, even though it might cost the lives of every prisoner taken. He hastened to relinquish his last hold upon his vessels and men.

"Wait a minute, Admiral!" he hastened to call. "You can at least give me time to ask them their wishes?"

"You are not to ask them!" was the sharp reply from above. "You are to tell them that they can save their lives by giving their parole. There

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is no alternative. I'm not asking favors, but simply giving you a chance."

"But——"

"That's all! My country doesn't have to beg favors from all nations combined. You have seen damned good evidence of that! It's no favor to me if you give your parole. You can have twenty minutes!"

The port above clanged shut, and Kamigawa, his cup of bitterness filled to the brim, reluctantly signaled the other members of the fleet, who seemed less bent than he upon delay. As the darkness settled more closely round them and joined the blanket of shadows below, there floated from every captive ship the plain white flag betokening complete surrender. The sun banner—the emblem of Japan—had disappeared from the seas. She was no longer a naval power, and her brief encroachment, advancement, and season of truculence was at an end.

As the last cloth of white fluttered out, the port above the Ito again opened, and a voice called down "Thank you," and then continued, "I'm sorry for you, Kamigawa, but it can't be helped. It's the fortune of war. Now we are going to bring your cruiser Yakumo alongside you and the Kashima, and we want you to have all those aboard transfer at once. We can't carry her any more."

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He did not explain to the enemy that radio-plane Seventeen, which had been struck by a shell, feared that the heavy burden of transporting the Yakumo would prove too much for a higher rate of speed.

Steadily and without apparent effort the three radioplanes came together, until the cruiser rubbed sides with the two battleships. Here were no rolling swells and turbulent waves to prevent such a maneuver. In the quietude of that aerial tryst, ruffled only by the breeze of the night, the ponderous masses of steel were brought into contact as gently as if held by giant hands. Grouped around them were other dread machines, which suddenly, to facilitate the transfer, threw the brilliant beams of a score of searchlights upon the decks of the doomed Yakumo, their rays illuminating and overflowing the upper works of the Ito and the Kashima, between which she was held motionlessly.

The great guns of the three war vessels stared open mouthed at each other. Their turrets loomed darkly, and cut off the farther rays of light, and in the white glare the faces of the men standing upon the decks took on a ghastly hue. With muttered conversation and alert obedience to orders, the men of the Yakumo stepped from their own deck to those beside them, dividing themselves into equal parts. It was hard to re-

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alize in that spot of light, surrounded by the black shadows of the night, where all was still and stationary, that they were three miles above the surface of a tossing sea, and that to step out into the gloom would be to step out of life. It was a ghostly interchange in a world of unreality. Reluctantly and sorrowfully they took their places on the battleships, and turned to bid farewell to the beautiful cruiser which had been their home for so many nights. They were all clear now, and not a living thing was left upon her.

Once more the dynamos of the radioplanes increased their speed. Slowly they drew apart, the one clasping the cruiser alone remaining motionless. The searchlights, like steady eyes of the night, still stared at the cruiser, whose every gun and every bolt was brought out clear and distinct in the radiance. During the day her crew had cast off her broken top hamper, which in any event would have been useless, and now, swept clean by the wind, she seemed illumined for her death. With the parting rub of her armored sides against the Ito and the Kashima she had bade a last good by to her sister ships, and now seemed the center of a tragedy of the night, waiting for her execution. From the deck of every surrendered ship silent and sorrowing men looked upon her as if fascinated, and something of pity crept into the eyes which watched her from the

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ports of that conquering fleet of the air. They too were sailors.

She was held thus for a moment, and the softened hearts of the conquerors gave to her a last honor. The port of Seventeen opened, a rope ladder fell from its metal doorstep, and down it passed a gray haired man, who had once commanded and loved such a cruiser as was she. It was Brockton. The captives on the decks of the captive ships strained forward, wondering what it could mean. The blue clad figure walked the length of the Yakumo, reached out a hand to a short halyard, and pulled down the flag of surrender. He rolled it into a bundle and tossed it out into the wall of darkness, and from beneath his coat withdrew a bundle which he unfolded and affixed to the loops. Suddenly, as if bestowing a last honor upon the dying, he gave a tug, and the flag of Japan was flung to the breeze. The Yakumo should not pass to death unhonored, and was destined to be the only warrior to go down with colors flying. A wild cheer of short duration burst from the vanquished as the officer remounted his ladder and closed his port.

Then, released and liberated, she fell, the brilliant rays following her to the end. Down, down, down, falling at first on an even keel, she plunged, her flag fluttering wildly in the descent. Gradually she turned bow on as if preparing for the dive

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to death. With terrific force she returned to the waves of the Pacific, and entered them, throwing up in that mighty impact a tremendous cascade of foaming waters, which lashed themselves into the air in mad wraiths of ghostly white, surged back in angry billows, and resumed their quietude. The Yakumo had gone to the graveyard of the valiant, and the searchlights showed nothing more than the crests of the depths which had furnished her a shroud.

The men of Japan who had witnessed her parting had been wrapped in breathless silence. Now it was broken by one great sob as the man who had commanded her turned away from the bridge of the Ito, blinded with tears. Above them the port reopened, and the fighting Admiral again addressed them; but in a voice which told that he too was not without sympathy.

"Admiral," he said, "order all your men to go below decks. We have been loafing all day, and will have to speed up now. It will be death to stay exposed."

Aroused from their last look at the Yakumo, they were amazed at this information, but complied; and before the last man had crowded down the companionways the wind began shrilling about their ears. Away through the night with sudden velocity shot the radioplanes at a speed which would bring them to the coast long before

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darkness had ceased. In all the American fleet there was not a man who did not know that Lake Washington at Seattle was their destination. Its landlocked sides, guarded by towering hills and giant forests, and overlooked by a splendid city, was to be the prison of the enemy's craft. Its length, its breadth, and its depth were sufficient to float the combined navies of the world.

Their flight was well timed; for it was still dark when they swam down through the air over the waters which were to reclasp the ships of Japan in their usual environment. The Norma swooped lower and lower, decreased the speed of her descent, passed over West Seattle on its little peninsula, the quiet Puget Sound with its long wharves, and then gently settled above the placid lake. Slowly, like a water fowl wearied of flight and seeking its ease, it approached the surface, and with infinite care rested its burden, until the Ito was again afloat.

Norma, at her chosen post of duty, put out a tired hand to a controller, gently moved it a notch, turned off the current which made the radio-plane a lodestone of terrific power, threw another switch as the Admiral beckoned, and then, with a great sigh of relief, felt the machine lift itself into the air. It came to a stop, and through a port, by the Admiral's side, she watched that procession of dull red lights emulate her example. Ship

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after ship was released, and invariably the signal came flashing to their eyes, "Deposited without accident." There was another quick interchange of orders; the Norma turned her beak toward the stars of the southeast, gathered headway, and led her followers back through the night in homing flight to the key which had seen their creation.

The Admiral gave a great sigh of satisfaction for work well done, and stretched himself out on a settee to rest, looking curiously as he did so at the supple figure in the hood which for nearly twenty-four hours had steadily led him on to victory. He called to her, and tried to induce her to accept relief; but she declined with a weary smile, saying, "No, not until we get home. It will be but a little while now."

Something in the words she had thoughtlessly used recalled her own heart longing. What were the achievements of war, the inspirations of conflict, or the glories of triumph, in comparison with peace, love, and home? With an indefinable sense of great yearning she thought that Guy was on the sea, going away from her and her people, and even in the heart of the radioplane which was canceling space at the rate of five hundred miles an hour the distance between them seemed interminable. Life was made up of good byes! And so in a reverie of bitterness she clung to the hood and fought against fatigue, until, as the morning

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was upon them, she sent the craft to rest in front of the shops where their return had been anxiously awaited. Overcome with weariness, and feeling throughout every fiber of her body the snapped tension of sudden relaxation, she staggered through the port into the fresh air of the dawn.

From every direction men were running madly to surround them, and even the Columbia was landing men upon the shores, who joined in the rush. The limping old Admiral stood in the door, when Roberts, supported by two surgeons, appeared. Norma clasped him in her arms and burst into noiseless, nervous sobs, which he misinterpreted.

"Failed! You failed, my daughter?" he asked forlornly, while the men waiting for news crowded forward to hear the answer. It was given by Bevins.

"Failed nothing! We cleaned them out and landed them where we started to without the loss of a life!"

Those still aboard the Columbia needed no messenger to bring the news. The workers of the plant burst into a frenzy of exultation. The Admiral stilled them with an upraised hand.

"Men," he said, "I take no credit for the result, and I'm big enough so to report to Washington. This battle brought out three heroes:

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Brockton, Jenkins, and above all this little girl, Norma Roberts." His "God Bless her!" was lost in the tumult. They were men intoxicated with the wine of victory. They yelled themselves hoarse. They patted one another on the back, hurled their caps into the air, and finally formed escorts of honor to conduct the men and officers of the fleet to their cabins, asking over and over for details of the fight.

And even as those tired fighters went to rest, in a city across the continent newsboys were crying their extras through the streets, and the citizens of a great city were asking one another how the night had worked its miracle. A lounging patrolman in Ravenna Park, which bordered on Lake Washington, had sleepily rubbed his eyes as the sun was tinting the everlasting snows of the Olympics, and had come to a sudden stop, leaning against a tree and wondering if he was still asleep; but with his knuckles he could not obliterate the floating vision before him. He convinced himself by a lusty hail, "Hello out there! What are you doing? Get off that lake!" and back to him there volleyed a storm of objurgations in an unknown tongue. Not until he had called a fellow officer and rowed a boat round those fallen monarchs of the deep did he learn that they were captive to his country, and then, elated with the news, he hastened to impart it.

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But this was not the only surprise for Seattle. For some days preceding troops had been pouring into the port, and it had been the general belief that they were being mobilized preparatory to embarkation for the Philippines or Japan. On this morning, however, there was an exodus. Nearly all the troops had disappeared in the night. Likewise there were strange happenings in the telegraph offices. When men went to consign messages they were met with the intelligence that the wires were in charge of military operators, that nothing could be received for any point beyond the borders of the United States, and that all messages without exception would be censored before transmission. The newspapers fumed and roared, until they learned that all incoming news would pass uninterruptedly; but that for purposes known only to the Government the story of the presence of the Japanese fleet would be closely guarded for the time being. For once "The Post - Intelligencer," "The Times," and "The Star" united in attacking the administration.

Polite officers forwarded appeals from the Chamber of Commerce to Washington; but the Government answered that there was no alternative, because if the secret was known throughout the United States the chances for its leakage across the lines would be augmented. All Sound traffic stopped, and from the great union depot no

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departing trains rumbled. Within an hour it was known that a cordon of soldiers surrounded the city, and that all traffic or communication with the outside world was interdicted. Seattle had been isolated.

Thus it was that the presence of the captured fleet and the method of its taking were unknown to the country at large. Seattle extended all consistent courtesies to the vanquished; but it afforded little balm.

And thus it was that for many days, imprisoned, powerless, and lost, with crippled tops, crushed stacks and under the white flag of surrender, the flower of Japanese prowess floated on an inland sea in sullen mourning, while the gasping world shuddered in contemplation of its fate.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT BEFELL THE EMPEROR



LIKE a lonely rock that has withstood the fury of a storm and the battering of the seas to emerge again into sunlight, the President felt his time of justification approaching. His hour of triumph was at hand, and his prayers were being answered; but the task was not yet done.

The unqualified victory over the Japanese fleet made the outcome of the war a certainty; hence it was with patience that the administration waited for the next move in the Far East, which must of necessity come from China. There was no doubt that she would assist her ally. At first this seemed an imminent action; but several days passed bringing through the secret service no news save that her fleet, huge and well manned, was making preparations to sail. The President, knowing that for the accomplishment of his purpose Oriental power must be broken, indulged in the fervent hope that the attack might come soon.

There was less trouble internally, as the people were beginning to have faith in the administra-

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tion, though they were speculating as to what course of procedure was being followed. It was while affairs were in this condition that the sailing of the British fleet was duly announced through secret channels of information. The coterie saw before it the necessity of either abandoning the hope of teaching China a drastic lesson and announcing its secret to the world or meeting the British squadrons and holding them hostage in the interest of peace. They chose the latter alternative, and thereby was caused the strangest chapter in the history of war.

Like that other sally outward to the Western seas, this one was timely. It was made when the British fleet might be met beyond the reach of wireless telegraph communication, and the departure from the key was also under cover of darkness. Again there was a resemblance to the Japanese affair, in that the appearance of the radioplanes created surprise and consternation on the warships. Here, however, the similarity ended. The Anglo-Saxon mind knows no such thing as surrender when once it is stirred to the depths of its stubbornness. It can read only two answers to the riddle of conflict,—victory or death,—as has been attested by many a hard fought battle on land and sea.

The armada of Great Britain had sailed with apprehensions, being fully cognizant that it was

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invading a territory of mystery and danger, and the vigilance of its watch, therefore, was never relaxed. The consternation caused by the first sight of the aerial fleet was immediately followed by a hurried clearing of the decks for action, although defeat in a battle against such overpowering odds was a foregone conclusion. No gun was fired, however, and all stood expectantly awaiting a declaration of intent from the monsters of the air which had come upon them in the full glare of the afternoon sun.

With slow and stately majesty the radioplanes approached, each flying the flag of the United States and beneath it the emblem of truce. The Dreadnought, answering sluggishly to the swell and hurling great cascades of water from its bow, was in the heart of the formation, and in its ponderous might seemed fearless of anything afloat. Toward it the foremost radioplane directed its course, dropping steadily down until full abreast and on a level with the great fighting tops, while the officers of the battleship watched with amazement its splendid control. Not till then was there a visible display of life aboard it. A port opened and into the blackness of its frame Bevins emerged, while directly behind him stood the scientist, who had recovered, and was to witness the first full demonstration of the power he had evolved. On the bridge of the battleship the

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British Admiral stood, surrounded by staff officers.

"Good afternoon, Admiral," the American hailed. "Glad to see you. How do you like the looks of us?"

Across Fields' face flitted a half smile. "We are very well indeed, Admiral Bevins; but can't say we are particularly glad to see you, or sure that we like you until we know more. Clever invention that. Must have been conceived by an Englishman."

Behind the United States officer a withered little figure became imbued with a sudden frenzy of passion and threatened to interject an unpleasant remark; but Bevins checked him with a laugh and grew serious again.

"Admiral," he said, "my country isn't at war with yours. You understand that."

Field looked relieved, and lost somewhat of his air of set defiance. At the head of his men he crossed to the end of the bridge where he might be nearer the one addressing him. The nervous strain of the situation was being rapidly diminished. "Frankly, I'm glad to be reassured," he replied. "There are a lot of things we'd rather know."

"And which I shall be glad to explain if you and a dozen of your immediate subordinates will come aboard as my guests."

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The invitation was immediately accepted; but it was a trying interview for the Britons. The machine on which they were received was the Roberts, which was the latest production of the plant on the key. It was larger than its predecessors, and had been made the most pretentious. It was elegantly appointed. Amidships it contained a drawing room on which the most careful workmanship had been lavished. The guests gathered round a huge mahogany table, whose polished top reflected the light from the colored ports of the dome, and were served with refreshments before Bevins recurred to the object of his visit. He drew from his pocket an official packet and laid it open before him.

"Gentlemen," he began, "of course you are interested in all that you have seen, and in the attitude of the United States. What I shall read to you are my orders. I have come out here to meet you for the purpose, first of all, that you may hear them."

The Roberts had ascended to an altitude above the others of the American fleet, and was resting in mid air. It was very still, the light hum of a small dynamo from behind the partitions being the only disturber of silence. He opened the document and read:

"You are instructed to intercept the British fleet and assure its officers of the good will of the

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United States toward His Majesty King Edward VII. and all his subjects. You are to explain to them that the United States is compelled, in pursuance of its adopted policy formulated at the commencement of the war with Japan, to maintain the secret of its power until such time as it is deemed expedient to announce it to the world. You will then endeavor to induce the British fleet to surrender itself into your hands as the guest of this country, assuring those in command that all damages accruing will be repaired by the United States. You are to use all due caution to avoid injury to life, property, or pride, and to transport the entire fleet to the waters of Chesapeake Bay, after which for a brief period the officers and men of Great Britain will be entertained by the United States."

Bevins stopped and looked into the faces confronting him, which expressed a variety of emotions, running the gamut from stolidity to wonder, and from complaisance to indignation. The paper in his hands gave out a crinkling noise as he turned it backward and forward between his fingers.

The British Admiral's visage was a frowning one. "Your country asks too much!" he said almost explosively. "And really it volunteers no explanation of its acts or intentions." Some of his companions nodded their heads in approval. "We can't accept."

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Bevins reopened the parchment. "I must then read you the concluding clause," he said, and began:

"It is strongly desired that there be no clash at arms; but in any event you are to return with the fleet."

There was brief silence in the room, which was broken by Fields, who jumped to his feet. Bevins also rose, and the other officers did likewise. The situation threatened unhappy conclusions; but Bevins held up a restraining hand and went on:

"Here! Before you underestimate the force of the last clause, let me give you a demonstration of what we can do and how difficult it would be for you to offer any defense or effective resistance whatever."

He turned to a speaking tube, gave a curt order, and requested his visitors to look through the transparent ports, which were suddenly opened beneath their feet. The Roberts swept up into the air to such a prodigious height that the internal pressure against her shell became terrific. She was at such an altitude that no mortal being could have withstood the strain, and only her splendid anchorable construction and cohesive qualities kept her from flying apart. The world below was reduced in appearance until its surface was obliterated in a dull haze and the shadows of the sun were marked against its eastern outline.

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In great circles she descended, until the water again became visible, then the vessels upon it, and last of all the crests of the waves. Now she swooped lower, and then at a speed of nearly six hundred miles an hour whipped a straight line close above the tops of the fighting masts, slowed down, and whirled in and out about and above the British ships as easily as would a swallow in playful flight. On the decks of the vessels men stared in wide eyed amazement at this demon of the air, at first fearing that control had been lost and the lives of those aboard were in jeopardy. Then at the splendid exhibition of speed and handling they were dumfounded. The Roberts then rose in one quick lift until it was above the plane of altitude assumed by the other machines, poised for a moment, and came to a stop. In all this time no one had spoken a word. Now they turned to the American, unloosing their convulsive clutches from the seats and liberated from the spell.

"Admiral, do you think there is any gunnery that can hurt us, anything that can overtake us, or that if we wish to we may not master the world?" he asked in a voice of extreme quiet.

Fields shrugged his shoulders hopelessly, made a grimace, and looked at his fellows. "Gentlemen," he said in a dry tone, "it seems to me that we should without any delay accept the hospitality

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which the United States has extended so courteously."

The others appreciated the grim humor of the situation, and in like vein acquiesced. The surprise which they had undergone was nothing compared to that with which, as the day waned, they witnessed the lifting of their craft from the waters. With the utmost care the task was accomplished, and everything made ready for the westward journey. Only one mishap occurred beyond the necessary damage to the ships, and that was not discovered until the following day. A sailor of the Dreadnought, maddened by the spectacle he had witnessed, had unleashed a life raft unobserved and thrown himself and it into the water by the use of its tackle at some hour of darkness when the vessels were traveling at slow speed and close to the surface of the waves. Bevens grieved more over this incident than any other; for he had set his heart upon a bloodless victory.

Thus it was that on the following day there rested in the Chesapeake a fleet whose fires were banked, whose men were prohibited from shore leave, and whose chief officers were guests in the principal hotels of New York and Washington under pledge of secrecy. But in this they might take heart; although some slight damage had been inflicted on the vessels, in no instance did the

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flag come down, and from each staff floated the Union Jack unsullied. Communication between ships and shores was interdicted; so even the inhabitants of the borders could do no more than look and guess as to how the fleet had sailed in without attracting attention or meeting with rebuff.

Another report came from China that the fleet of the dragon was still under waiting orders; hence there was nothing for the administration to do but mark time, which it did with poor grace. Within a few days, however, a more disturbing report came from Europe by way of Canada, the usual source of communication. It was to the effect that the Kaiser, learning of the disappearance of the British fleet, and believing it destroyed, was showing quick signs of aggression. Vainly the administration hoped that his belligerent intentions might be overestimated; but the passage of days proved that he might be a menace to the general plan.

It was hourly expected that the presence of the radioplanes would be required in the West to meet the Chinese. In view of this necessity, it was decided to dispatch Brockton and Jenkins to Berlin on a mission of diplomacy. They were ordered to visit the Kaiser at night, landing at a time and place where they could escape observation, induce the Emperor and his Chancellor to

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get aboard the radioplane, and then, after it had been demonstrated that Germany would be powerless in the event of war, to deliver messages announcing that the United States purposed to gain what support she could for a world's peace voluntarily, but would compel it if need be.

Jenkins was familiar with the German capital, having been naval attaché there for a number of years. It was he who evolved the details. The American Ambassador was unaware of his country's defense until informed on the night of the arrival, and was speedily enlisted in the enterprise. Through him the Kaiser granted the interview, which led to his visiting the radioplane which had been brought to rest beyond the outskirts of the city.

Brockton's task proved a most difficult one; for the Emperor, a man of science and interested in all engines of warfare, insisted on being conveyed not only to the plant on the key, but across Chesapeake Bay, where he might look down upon the British fleet. The night was ideal for the purpose, Nature seeming to lend herself in behalf of peace. The *Norma*, now fully fitted and comfortable, was utilized for the mission. Like all others of the American fleet, she carried provision sufficient to enable her to pass many times round the world in case of emergency.

The Kaiser marveled at the display of ingenu-

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ity, and was told all but the secret, without which no one could cast the radioactive metal. He was even permitted to handle the steering levers and direct her flight for a time, and entered into this with the enthusiasm of a boy. He would have driven her through the air at a speed which would have heated her interior had he not been cautioned, and relinquished his place in the hood only when the shores of the western continent were reached and loomed darkly far below.

It had not been Brockton's intention to show him over the plant on the key; but the sovereign insisted that he should be permitted to alight, it being his first visit to America, which he had always longed to make, but had never anticipated. He was permitted to traverse the great machine shops and view the working of the blast furnace, and also to gaze at the formidable fleet of monsters that rested idly along the beach. Muffled in his greatcoat to avoid recognition, he was strictly incognito, and met neither the inventor, "the assistant," nor Bevins, who many hours before had retired to their rest.

His mood of curiosity had given way to one of thoughtfulness when the Norma again took him aboard and started northward. He sat silently in the central chamber of the radioplane, taking no part in the conversation between the Chancellor and Brockton, until the machine hovered over the

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waters of the Chesapeake, on the bosom of which, at anchor, rested the British fleet, and then discussed the possibilities of crossing the continent to Lake Washington.

Brockton was compelled to enter a protest, explaining that inasmuch as the element of time for his return must enter into their calculations, they had only a small margin. The Kaiser remembered that he was in a machine which annihilated space; but that in traveling from the west to the east the difference in the rising hour of the sun meant much in maintaining secrecy; so he reluctantly relinquished the idea.

"But it will not trouble you, will it, to carry me across the cordon which has been established between your country and Canada on the homeward flight?" he asked, and to this Brockton assented.

They turned to the north, and at a high altitude saw far below them the constant glow of searchlights dotting out in streamers of white the boundary line between the two countries. As far as the eye could reach to the east and the west the watch was being maintained unceasingly. The Kaiser recovered his good humor, laughed, and then, having nothing more to view below, returned to the hood, where he again asked to manipulate the machine.

Jenkins was not pleased by the recklessness with which his august guest experimented with

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the levers and switches; but feared to remonstrate, though uttering an occasional word of caution. Suddenly, as if confused, the Kaiser opened three switches at once. The machine gave a mighty lurch, and failed to obey the expert hand that was instantly reached forward to control it. The needle showing the direction took a swift leap and pointed to the northwest.

The Kaiser stepped back from the hood, while Jenkins vainly strove to bring the Norma back into her eastward course. Rapidly he pulled the switches to and fro; but no answering spark showed that they were in contact. In alarm he checked the speed of the radioplane, and called to Brockton, who, frightened by the erratic movement of the craft, had entered the hood.

"I have to report, sir," Jenkins said, "that the steering currents of the radioplane are out of order, and that we can no longer direct her course. She is now heading nor'-nor'west."

Brockton's brows came together in a scowl. Nothing but the presence of His Majesty prevented an explosion. "What do you suggest?" he asked sharply.

"That we come to land and make an examination and whatever repairs are necessary, sir."

"Very well. Do so at once!"

Within a few minutes the Norma had found a lower level and her searchlights were bringing

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into view the ground beneath. They were traveling slowly over a primeval forest in far upper Canada. A spot came to view where there were no trees, and into this, like a crippled bird, the Norma came to a stop and rested.

The Emperor watched the first attempts to define the difficulty with anxiety, and then, yielding to his desire for a sight of the open, asked and obtained the unclosing of the port, through which he sauntered into the night. Without observing what was around him, he stood leaning against the shell of the radioplane, thinking with annoyance of the difficulties of state which might accrue if his absence extended over a day. He was aroused by the sounds of hammering and rending within, and reëntered the craft, which was now flooded with a blinding glare of radiance brought into life by the ceaselessly turning dynamos.

On their knees, with uniforms cast aside, and recklessly tearing away the carefully wrought woodwork of the paneled side, were the Admiral and the engineer, while back of them the distracted Chancellor of the Empire held a short crowbar in his hands and displayed muscular arms which had been bared to the elbow.

"I am sorry, Your Majesty," apologized the Admiral, looking up from his work; "but I am afraid that a confused handling of the levers has

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exposed a weakness. A cross current, a burned insulation, and a bad connection have fused our wires somewhere, and we may be delayed for a short time."

"How long?"

"I cannot say. Aside from the delay, there need be no apprehension, because we have abundant food. We shall have to uncover the damaged section before we can estimate the length of our stay."

Fairly gritting his teeth in rage, the Kaiser turned on his heel and strode out into the open air again. What a fool he had been to intrust himself to a strange mechanism which at best was treacherous! A day's delay would not mean much; but what if they were detained for many? The waning moon had risen, and in its light he marched up and down a stretch of turf with military precision, until his anger began to disappear and his natural philosophy to afford relaxation. He became conscious of the beauties of the night and the wilderness, and as time went on was engrossed in contemplating them.

Only the moon and he seemed in possession of this cleft in the forest, this grass carpeted glade in the center of whose breadth a hurrying brook threw strange ribbons of light upward. Bordering this asylum of the wilderness were the illimitable shadows cast by lofty spruce, fir, and hemlock

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trees, which thrust their slender plumes like curious observers high above the denser growths of scrubby birch and jack pine. Here and there were splotches of light where the moon found ragged openings, making of the woods a royal robe spotted without regularity. It was a world of enchantment, mysterious in its stillness, mystic in its beauty, and alluring in its stateliness. Cares of state were forgotten, and he was yielding to its spell, when a voice at his elbow speaking in his native tongue interrupted his meditations.

“Your Majesty,” the Chancellor said, “they have found the break, and say that with the tools at command it will require several days perhaps to repair it. Admiral Bevins expresses his regrets and——”

“*Gott im Himmel!*” burst from the Emperor’s lips, and with a gesture of hopelessness he waved his subject away and began an agitated march backward and forward, while the Chancellor returned to render what assistance he could.

CHAPTER IX

HIS MAJESTY'S VISIT



IN the heart of the woods, untrodden before by man, the sound of the hammer awoke the German Emperor after his hours of anxious study. By choice he had declined to sleep in the radioplane, and rolled himself in his blankets on an open spot of turf. The cares of the day were upon him again with all their perplexities. The sun had not risen, and the cool breath of the morning came to his lungs with invigorating freshness, while a bird of the far north was beginning a thin piping to its mate, and a camp robber, brilliantly impertinent, hopped round his woodland couch and gazed unabashed at royalty.

He threw aside the blankets which had been tightly rolled round him, walked to the brook, whose song had lulled him in his dreams of the night, and bathed his hands and face in the icy water. A great trout, disturbed by the intrusion, sped swiftly away from a rock and disappeared in a dark pool with a final sweep of its tail. The Emperor dried his face on his handkerchief and

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walked slowly across the glade to the Norma, which he entered curiously.

There they all were as on the night before, tired, work worn, and anxious, the Chancellor still with his sleeves rolled up, the Rear Admiral stripped to his undershirt, and the engineer peering through his glasses at the tangles of wire. On the night before the Kaiser had stormed and threatened, had mumbled angry soliloquies, and sworn mighty oaths to the unheeding woods. Now at the sight of these faces before him he understood to the full that these, his hosts, must have labored throughout the night trying to undo the accident which perhaps his own hands had wrought. It softened his mood.

They saluted him, and Brockton rose stiffly to his feet, wiped his hands on his trousers, and repaired to the rear of the radioplane, from which he apologetically returned with breakfast for his guest. The Emperor ate with an appetite which was made keen by the balsamy night air in which he had slept, and then began wishing that he too might take part in this manual toil. Almost involuntarily he assisted the fat old Chancellor, who was prying loose another board with a crowbar; but he felt that he was in the way, and after lounging round the craft for a time decided that he would have another look at the brook. It was swarming with trout, and, half ashamed of his

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zest, he returned to the Norma, and, like a boy preparing to play truant, furtively secured a line, and attached it to a fly which he had in his pocket-book.

It was noon before the workers saw him again. They came out of the dark hull for a cold luncheon, and were joined by the Emperor, who sat silently through the meal. Again they resumed work, and this time it was dusk when they emerged. There before them was a camp fire, and studiously broiling trout, caught with and prepared by his own hands, was the Kaiser. On huge pieces of birch bark before the coals he had spread his catch, and with a boy's jubilation laughed at their surprise. His national philosophy had conquered, and the sovereign had become a democrat in truth. As a boy he recounted his adventures of the day, and as a tired boy he went to rest. The next day was given up to the rifle, and hunting such as he had never dreamed of having was before him. Indeed, he had turned camp hunter, and with success. So ended the second day, and so passed many others.

And each day brought him nearer to those round him, each night brought him better rest, and every hour added to the broadening of his serenity. He was now merely a man among men, playing his part in his own way, enjoying it, and

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finding the worries of empire dropping away in this spot where all his crown of rulership availed him nothing. What was the need to fret when his hands were tied? Why not dismiss it all from his mind? The great federation would pass on and on long after his bones had gone to dust. Here in these Canadian woods, which he had never dared hope to invade, was life such as he had dreamed of, freedom such as he had never known, and absence of all formality. Here were men who were learning to love him for himself, and for whom he was forming an affection that would last him to the end.

Strange as it seemed, the cloud which had disturbed him on the night of the accident had taken another form. Then it had been because he was to be detained for an indefinite time. Now it was because the detention was to be so short, and he saw with regret that the time for his departure was nearly at hand. He foresaw the reluctance with which he would enter that craft of the air and hear its metal door close him in for homeward flight, but as a prison door shutting him out forever from the forests and hills, the pools and brooks, which he had learned to love. Only now and then, as he tramped beside some stream or followed some game trail cut through the fallen leaves by countless caribou, he would smile ironically at the amazement and alarm which must

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have been caused by his absence, not only in his own Empire, but in the United States where were those who had caused his disappearance.

And in both surmises he was correct; but the distress in the American Republic was perhaps the most keen. Not since the beginning of hostilities had the President and his associates suffered such grave apprehensions as when it became known to a certainty that Brockton's endeavor had met with accident or disaster.

On the first day when the expedition failed to return from its voyage of conciliation no undue alarm was occasioned, it being considered entirely possible that it had been compelled to return directly to the key to avoid observation. Another twenty-four hours of silence caused comment; but again it was regarded as tenable that a barrier in the first quest had required a second trip. The third day passed with anxious expectations but no news. The fourth, however, was a memorable one; for then it became known to the entire civilized world that the heads of a nation had been abducted, and the situation in Washington grew almost unbearable.

In response to an urgent message to the plant, "Old Bill" Roberts, Norma, and Bevins appeared on the fifth night, utilizing the new radio-plane for their visit. The gravity of the consultation which followed was intense; but the faith of

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the inventor in his work afforded some measure of relief.

"It would be almost impossible," he asserted, "for anything worse to befall them than delay. They may have been cast away in the air or on the land by an accident to their steering gear, which would require flight in straight lines. Nothing but a blow such as was sustained by Seventeen in battle could even temporarily stop both dynamos; hence it is improbable that they lost their lives."

Step by step he reasoned out the course which would be pursued, and at last gave it as his opinion that the *Norma* had come to ground in Canadian woods. He suggested searching expeditions, even though it entailed the exposure of the secret, the abandonment of the Oriental campaign, and the opportunity to establish permanent peace. The President alone stood steadfast for the latter hope, and was quick to offer a new plan. It was that the people of Great Britain themselves should have a conclusive and final demonstration, and, yielding to his arguments, it was agreed upon.

The project was no less daring than those which had been executed before. The *Dreadnought* was to be deposited in the Thames under cover of darkness, and in an apparently impossible position, where the people of London might look upon it as an object lesson. Immediately after-

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wards the King and his most powerful officials were to be shown the working of the radioplane, that they might be in a position to advance measures for peace and disarmament, fortifying their arguments by their own observations. The utmost secrecy was to be maintained, because in the meantime the Chinese armada might have sailed. In case it had not, the secret would be given out and search begun actively for the missing Norma and her distinguished passengers; but in any event British support would have been assured.

Bevins, foreseeing the difficulty of his task, asked and obtained permission to invite the British Admiral to accompany him, the wisdom of which was evidenced later. Favored by the difference in time, the speedy Roberts on that very night crossed the Atlantic and deposited letters to secret service agents in London, instructing them to obtain positive knowledge of where the King might be found the following evening. On her return she conveyed Fields and the Dreadnought to the key, preparatory to the momentous journey.

That flight which was again to disturb the thrones of Europe was accomplished without incident, but not without difficulty. The Roberts swooped down from the heights of air, untenanted save by her, to find spread between the earth and sky a blanket of fog, thick and impenetrable.

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Into it she slowly dropped, groping this way and that over the unsuspecting city, whose sounds came up to her but gave no hint as to locality. Aimlessly she wandered here and there in the murk, taking desperate chances in her quest. Suddenly something loomed directly below the open port, from which Bevins was leaning and peering down, and only a quick change of course avoided a collision. Fields joined him, and identified the dome of Saint Paul's. It was a narrow escape, but enabled them to set their course and gain the deserted greens of Saint James's Park, where Bevins was lowered by ropes to the earth.

He stood for a moment while the bulk of the radioplane and the Dreadnought which she was carrying rose into the air and disappeared from view. He felt alone in an unfriendly city, but set his teeth and stumbled out to a street, where he enlisted the services of a constable and a hansom, and was conveyed to the Cecil, whose lighted doors stared out upon the fog washed courtyard leading from the Strand. His message of the previous night had met with instant response, and no one would have suspected that the two men who lounged in the hotel entrance in seeming idle conversation, smoking and watching passersby, were important agents in the hands of fate. As nonchalantly as they had met they parted, one returning within doors, and the other sauntering

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back to the waiting hansom which was to convey the Admiral to the Hippodrome and a daring audience with the King.

The fog deadened bells of the ancient city marked only an hour's time before he had emerged and returned to the park entrance, where the wondering driver was dismissed, shaking his head and marveling at the idiosyncrasies of the Americans, who seemed never to have a reasonable destination. Once more the grim old Admiral limped through the paths to his rendezvous and gave the whistled signal to his waiting craft, which during his absence had released its burden near Westminster bridge and above Blackfriars, where her position would be both accessible and impressive to the people on the following morning.

Up into the air for a short distance, then down again in hovering silence, the Roberts went, and landed her commander in the garden behind Buckingham. The fog was no longer an enemy; for now she remained motionless only a few feet above the roof which had sheltered so many Kings and Queens. This nearness aided the quick visit of the British officer to his sovereign when called, and prevented delay when the monarch and his companions appeared for their journey. The fog had become an ally.

Those who sit upon England's throne may

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never show surprise,—so runs tradition,—but on this night an expression of astonishment burst from one of her sovereigns as he entered the yawning portal of the strange machine. Up to that moment neither he nor his companions had entertained a belief that the American engine of destruction could be other than some powerful, speedy, and invincible submarine. Now in the cloak of fog and darkness, within sound of the roar of traffic past his palace gates, in the midst of his own garden, he found a formidable monster with undreamed-of might.

With his companions he was ushered through a shadowy companionway without hearing the stealthy closing of the port through which he came. Nor was he aware as he entered the brilliantly lighted drawing room amidships, that already he had been lifted into the light of the stars and was flying through space over the Atlantic ocean at a speed of six hundred miles an hour. It was incomprehensible that before his first questions had been answered the ribbon of the channel had been passed and Ireland had lost itself in the eastern horizon. Gravely interested and steadily courteous, he inspected the radioplane under the guidance of the inventor and his daughter, who made known to him its capabilities, and it was his own suggestion that the trip might be extended to the Chesapeake, where the fleet of

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the Lion was moored. For once the first Lord of the Admiralty showed eagerness, and was visibly pleased when Bevins said there could be no objection to the King's desire.

Between the inventor and the King, as they sped westward, there was established a friendship. Gruff and querulous "Old Bill" Roberts, democratic to the core, and respecting men only for their real worth, found in this quiet, self contained guest one whom he could admire. And to the monarch the scientist was the most interesting man he had ever met, considering that his past achievements had gained world wide fame, to be capped with the surprising creation of this aërial masterpiece. From time to time he glanced at the stately American girl, who sat silently beside the Prime Minister. He found himself puzzled by the brooding wistfulness of her eyes and speculating as to what yearning had mirrored its sadness in their depths.

Not until Bevins had recounted the tale of the western battle did the King realize that on occasion the supple hands of the girl might become things of steel, and that within her was a soul of flame. She begged permission to retire before the Admiral had fairly begun his story, and was not there to hear that stern old veteran of the seas conclude with the trenchant statement, "It was not I, Your Majesty, who won the battle that day;

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it was that slip of a girl who led the cohorts of the Eagle down upon them. It was she who clasped the flag in her arms when the battle was done."

The men in the room leaned forward in silence when Bevins ended. They had been carried away into the realm of imagination to picture the stirring clash of mighty arms and valorous deeds. Before anyone could speak an officer appeared at the door.

"I have to report that we are above the Chesapeake, sir," he said to his superior.

It was the breaking of reverie, the sharp call from the past to the present, and the King rose expectantly. The lights of the Roberts flashed out and left them in darkness. The ports below opened, and they grouped themselves round them, with night glasses tendered by their host.

The waning moon lighted up the quiet reaches far beneath, and outlined in diminutive spectral shapes the fleet of anchored ships. The great machine swooped lower until they could descry the telescoped funnels, from whose ragged mouths came no curl of smoke, and the bared decks whose lengths were paced only by men of the watch. Aside from these there was no sign of life. A mighty squadron, bereft of power, floating on still waters beneath a dying moon! If America wished to prove her supremacy, the lesson was complete. The royal shoulders outlined against the light of

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the port gave one great shudder of sorrow, and turned away. When the shutters closed and the lights returned, the King was resting his brow upon his hand, the Lord of the Admiralty was standing with tightly clasped hands, and the Prime Minister was leaning with folded arms against the polished frame of the port through which he had viewed Briton's vanquished pride.

"If Your Majesty pleases," the voice of the American Admiral broke into the quietude, "I have promised to land Miss Roberts and Admiral Fields before our return. With your consent we shall stop in the place chosen for all our visits to Washington, in the outskirts."

The monarch, still thinking of the silent fleet, assented, and the radioplane swept downward at a tangent to the lonely field. Again the lights went out, the port opened, and the slight shock of landing was felt. Almost instantly a man in uniform stood before it and saluted the Admiral, who started back in surprise.

"A message for you, sir, from the President and Secretary of the Navy, with requests that it be opened and read immediately," the officer announced.

Bevins returned to the light of the hood and read:

"Kindly report to the White House immediately upon arrival. In case His Majesty, the King

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of England, has returned with you, which we earnestly hope is the case, present to him the hearty good will of the President and people of the United States of America, and extend to him our urgent invitation either to accompany you, with those who may be his companions, or await the return of a committee of invitation and reception which will wait upon him as soon as it becomes definitely known that he is with you.

“In case he did not accompany you on your return, it will be necessary for you to return to London at once, inviting him to a conference of great importance, which is occasioned by the exigencies of events which have taken place to-night. In any case you will report to us immediately for instructions.”

Puzzled by this explicit message, Bevins paused for a moment, with his brows drawn down in thought, and then returned to the drawing room, where a shaded light rested in the center of the table round which his guests were seated. With a brief explanation he handed the order to the King, who calmly placed his glasses upon his high, fine nose, leaned across the table, and perused it.

Everything of the night was strange and unusual. A few hours ago he had gone to a theater to rest his nerves, and here he was across the Atlantic, informally, and learning new lessons or

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receiving astounding revelations with each beat of time. He had gone thus far, and would go through to the end, and would go informally.

"We prefer to accompany you," was all the reply he made, and the party filed out into the night, where two big automobiles brought for this very emergency were in waiting. They whirled away to the White House, where they were met in the Blue room by the President and his immediate advisers. The King himself established the basis of etiquette by extending his hand to the President and his companions. He assumed no deportment of royalty; but as the first gentleman of England greeted the first gentleman of America.

"Your Majesty," the President began, "the time is at hand when the United States has no further object in concealing the power at her command; the sole cause of concealment, that of meeting the Chinese fleet, having been nullified by the action of that country itself. China has broken her alliance with Japan, is ready to make such overtures as we wish for peace, and is dispersing her fleet."

The President paused for a moment, and looked at those around him. The King, steadily watching him, was impressed with his simple dignity, and read aright the great and high purpose that shone in his eyes. Once more he resumed:

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"It has come to this issue, Your Majesty, much sooner than I had expected; but events which make for war and peace move fast. They are in the hands of God Almighty, and not of rulers. I desired this interview, because you can assist me in what I have to do, and for which I believe I am a mere instrument in the hands of a Power before whom all must bow."

"And I am honored," the sovereign instantly responded.

With his officials he was conducted to the President's private apartments, where they were followed by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Navy.

The King looked round the room, which he had entered on but one other occasion, long years before, when as a Prince and without hope of a throne he had been received by a former President of the United States. How many men had occupied it since then, and how few of them had left any great individual mark on the world's history! Was this man before him to prove greater than any since that immortal Lincoln who had fearlessly branded the trail of freedom across his country? He took the proffered seat and waited for the President to speak, only half comprehending that he was entering upon one of the most important conferences that the world had ever known.

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"Your Majesty and gentlemen," the President began in his low, finely modulated voice, "I told you I wished your assistance. I need more than that; I want your advice. I have been a man with a dream, and that you may know how much it has meant to me, I must tell you something of myself. I come of a race that for generations has given its blood for country. It was almost obliterated in the wars of the Revolution and of 1812. In the great rebellion there were five men in my family, a father and four older brothers, the youngest a mere lad, who went to war as volunteers. Some of them never returned. My father was brought back shattered by barbarism to die in my mother's arms. The lad that had gone out with his drum came back to drag out only a few wretched months of suffering.

"My home was on the borderland, where men fought backward and forward across our fields." He paused for a moment as if the memory of his childhood was too bitter for recapitulation, then went bravely on: "In those years the sight of ghastly wounds and cruel death was before me sometimes daily, but never far removed. When peace came there was nothing left to my mother but her ravaged farm, her bitter poverty, and her one boy. Oh, it was a nightmare, gentlemen, that never dimmed. It was a memory that never left me, as, hard working, poorly clad and sometimes

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hungry, I grew to manhood. My mother went, as did thousands of other widows made by war, to an early grave, prematurely worn out by work and grief."

The floodgates were down at last. His repression was going, and he rose to his feet behind his desk trembling in every fiber, and with white, quivering lips. In the stillness of the room he stood thus for an instant; then his teeth suddenly came together with a click and his fist came down upon the table in one quick, hard blow of emphasis.

"Do you wonder," he said, "that I swore to give my life to peace? Is it strange that I who have suffered have taken unusual means to keep others from suffering as I and mine have? I have invited you here not as the President of a nation, but as man to men to help me put—an—end—to—war!"

Every word of his final declaration was bitten off with sharp emphasis and accentuated by a fist which beat time. The King was suddenly conscious that he had leaned forward in his chair so far that nothing but the tense grip of his hands upon the arms had held him down. In all his years he had witnessed no such scene of emotion as this, nor heard a more earnest appeal.

The President, as if regretting his lack of control, settled wearily into his seat. He had said

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things in a way that in any other man would have been undignified; but he, inspired by the grandeur of his purpose, failed to realize that an angel with a flaming sword could scarcely have been more impressive. He had been addressing no ordinary audience. Before him was an august ruler, but more than that, a great man. And in the hush which followed, the sovereign rose from his seat, stepped across to the desk, and for one of the few times in his life gave untrammelled vent to his feelings as a man. He put his hand out across the polished mahogany top as the tall form of the President straightened up. Their hands met in one strong grip of understanding, and they looked squarely into each other's eyes, reading, comprehending, and binding themselves together in a common purpose for humanity.

It was not the etiquette which demands that all men shall stand when a King is on his feet that brought the others from their chairs, erect, breathless, and motionless. It was rather the impulsive respect and veneration due to two great minds which before their very eyes were entering an unwritten compact for a high and noble cause.

Once more they took their seats; but now by the subtle alchemy of humanity they drew their chairs together. They were no longer rulers and subjects, Englishmen and Americans, but men inspired with magnanimity toward all their fellow

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beings. They were on a Godlike plane reasoning out momentous plans involving the nations of the world and all mankind. From their combined fund of knowledge they evolved methods which were to strengthen the weak and put in leash the strong. All reckoning of time was lost in this review of what had been accomplished and what was to be done.

The night paled, the sun crept up; the lights of the darkness were extinguished, and the day advanced without their heeding it. The last tentative clause was signed, and each knew the part which his country must play. Again they were all upon their feet, looking into one another's faces and abruptly conscious of weariness and relaxation. Too overcome to resume their homeward journey, the visitors accepted the hospitality of the White House for a few hours' rest, and staggered to their rooms.

Once, more than a hundred years before, an unwise King had caused a war between brothers which had sent them on diverse paths. Each had prospered but held aloof. And now after all this time a wiser King had proffered his hand, and the brothers were to be friends again in truth, and were to travel side by side unto the end.

CHAPTER X

LIGHTS IN THE NIGHT



HAT night for the first time a radio-plane flew through the air from Washington to New York, where it came to earth in a portion of Central Park adjacent to one of the most exclusive hotels. It was not late in the evening; but while it did not court discovery neither did it use any great endeavor to avoid it. Those aboard had only one wish, which was to avoid the gathering of a crowd. The machine was the Roberts, conveying the King and his counselors for a short interview with the higher officers of the British fleet. They had bade good by to the man in the White House, who was henceforth to hold a place in their strongest admiration and friendship, and were now preparing for their homeward journey.

The park entrances had been closed in advance, and the public debarred from its paths, hence there was no demonstration when the party stepped out of the craft and took seats in a motor car which had been awaiting their arrival. Only the Secretary of State and Bevins accompanied

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them as escorts to the glaring entrance of the hotel, and even the august clerks were unaware of the identity of their visitors. With polite insolence the party was directed to a parlor until the manager could be summoned, and he on being informed that the King wished to meet his officers at once, conducted them to the elevator which carried them upward.

By requisition of the Government the entire top floor had been given up to the accommodation of the British guests, and with them on this night as entertainers were many of the higher officers of the American navy who throughout the war had been forced to rest in idleness. The realization that their days of seafaring were nearly at an end had not come to them with full force, and all within the extemporized naval club were simply awaiting and hoping for orders which would put an end to inactivity.

Beneath the shaded lights of the ceiling were many tables, at some of which men in fatigue uniforms were being initiated into an American game which seemed to find favor, while at others spirited discussions were being held. Wreaths of smoke curling up to meet the lights added to the air of informality, and a burst of laughter in one corner of the room indicated the success of some raconteur. The door swung open noiselessly, and on its threshold stood one who looked smilingly

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at the idle veterans of two nations. He stood thus for an instant before the crusty old Scotch Admiral known to his fellows as "Jimmy" Barr lifted his eyes in the direction of the door. His mouth opened in astonishment beneath its bearding of red, and his sharp eyes frowned as he peered across the shoulder of the man opposite, and then, with one hurried leap he gained his feet, upsetting his chair in his haste. His heels came together, and his arm was raised in salute as he exclaimed loudly:

"Gentlemen, the King!"

Instantly those in the room looked at the Admiral and then at the entrance. There was the muffled sound of chairs hastily shoved across the carpeted floor, startled exclamations, and a hurried rising. Two score of hands came to the salute, and a dramatic moment followed in which their owners strove to gather their wits. It was almost unbelievable that their sovereign was before them.

The King looked at them gravely, and then took a few steps forward, and his companions followed. He stopped almost in front of Barr, and slowly raised his hand, with open fingers in a gesture which combined greeting and a demand for attention. He wasted neither time nor words.

"My men," he said, "I have come from a conference with His Excellency, the President of the

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United States. Its results will be made known to you within the course of a few days at the most, or hours at the least. I have come to say to you that in submitting yourselves to an invincible power for reasons which you could not fathom you acted wisely and now have our full approval."

The British officers exchanged quick side glances of relief. Barr alone had the temerity to break into an open smile of satisfaction. They were not, then, to be censured by their country, and the situation would bear no disgrace. His Majesty continued:

"You have unwittingly assisted in reuniting the Anglo-Saxon race, I hope, after its separation of nearly a century and a half. You have been made involuntary guests by a man whose friendship I esteem, and whom I honor above all men. I refer to the President of this nation, and I ask that you remember him as kindly as I do. Your countrymen will have no just cause for criticising you or your actions. Instructions will be sent you in due time through the Admiralty. Until then you are to maintain patience. I wish you good night."

With dignified grace he bowed to them, took a step backward, turned on his heel, and was going before they grasped the significance of his speech or awakened from the wonder of his unexpected visit to this alien land. The clang of an elevator

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door recalled them and stirred them to action. They ran after him, rang for and surged into the elevators, to debouch on the street a minute later a group of hatless men craving further explanations and wishing to honor their ruler. They crowded to the edge of the pavement beside which the motor car was humming in readiness for its start.

The King saw them coming, smiled at their eagerness, and turned to Bevins with a question which they could not hear. The American Admiral gave a laughing reply, and the monarch leaned over to Jimmy Barr, who was standing on the curb close at hand.

“My host, the Admiral,” the King said, “says lack of time prevents your accompanying us. Otherwise we should ask you to witness our embarkation. We are returning to London on a radioplane to-night, and the world’s mystery is at an end. We must say good night.”

The lights of the hotel entrance were full upon them, bringing out in detail to the curious guests who were gathering on the marble steps the men with bared heads and the gray bearded English gentleman in the machine. They saw him nod to the chauffeur, who was looking back, saw the latter turn to his work, and then the machine leaped away into the broad drive toward the nearest park entrance. And to the amazement of the onlook-

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ers the men in uniform stood at salute until the machine had disappeared. Not even then did they disperse, but stood there silently watching the skies. Pedestrians joined the group, speculating as to the cause of this uniformed gathering.

Several minutes elapsed, and then from one and another came startled exclamations. Up from the silent park, soaring above the trees and shrubbery with stately sweep, came a strange row of brilliant lights. The secret was out at last, and the American officers gave a frantic cheer, which was joined in by the Englishmen, and taken up by the crowd. As if to recognize their parting shouts, the searchlights of the Roberts in dazzling ripples of color flared suddenly upward and round in fan shaped sweeps, which were finally directed full upon the streets below. At a comparatively low altitude the craft went slowly across the city and headed toward the Atlantic, while men upon the pavements beneath took up the cry, until from all sides windows opened and the people rushed into the streets for a sight of this mysterious aerial visitor. Reaching the lower edge of the city, the radioplane shot up and up until it was a speck of light against the stars, took one last circling flight, and with marvelous speed disappeared in the east. And while America was gaining her first knowledge of this incredible flying machine, the

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Roberts was shooting away in a long straight track for the Old World.

The King had watched the sights below as long as they were visible. Through his glasses he had seen the streets become filled with excited men, women, and children, and their shoutings had come to him faintly above the hum of the dynamos. The glimmerings of the great harbor dimmed and died away, and here and there could be descried the lights of the slow steaming patrol ships keeping the outpost watch upon the sea. When the last sign of life had vanished, he turned to his companions in silence, thinking of all that had taken place within the few recent hours.

Only a short time ago they had entered this aerial chamber, standing in dread of the unknown terror of the waters and the menacing silence of this western continent they were leaving behind. Only a few hours past they had trembled at the powerlessness of their nation and shudderingly awaited the shock of invasion.

Now they were going back to England bearing news that would upset old ideas, remove all fear for the future, and ally her with the most powerful nation history had ever known. They had sailed away furtively with darkened ports, and were now returning in a glare of white light, careless of who might observe. Events had followed each other in such remarkable sequence, with such as-

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tounding rapidity, that it wearied the mind to follow them. The King was pondering over the new situation when with no preliminary notice every light in the radioplane went out and they were left in darkness.

From without and through the open door came the voices of the Admiral and engineer in conversation:

"It can't be an enemy."

"Hardly; but we dare take no chances."

"What do you think it is?"

"I don't know. A minute or two will tell if they have seen us."

The King and his countrymen fumbled for their glasses in the darkness, found them, and lined themselves up against the transparent port which had not been closed. The cause of the sudden cautionary measures was apparent. There, comparatively far away, and high up against the starlit sky, they saw the blazing line of a searchlight thrust up into the darkness. It wavered uncertainly for an instant, and then slowly, as if feeling its way, approached them. It seemed uncertain and for a moment disappeared. Their own machine had come to a halt.

For an instant nothing was visible, and then there leaped into the air a vertical beam of red. Beside it came another steady ray of brilliant white, and then to complete the color trio a vivid

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shaft of blue arrayed itself beside the other two. Outside in the hood they heard a wild unrestrained burst of cheering, and the cabin was again flooded with light. The old Admiral stepped hurriedly in, his face aglow, and his cap in his hand.

"We have sighted the Norma, Your Majesty, the craft which disappeared with His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Germany."

Before he had finished speaking the signal calling hearers to the wireless telephone buzzed insistently, and he turned to answer. From the dome above they could see answering lights playing rapidly from their own craft. They heard Bevins talking to some one excitedly, and peering once more through the side ports saw they were rushing onward to meet this other traveler of the spaces. With decreasing speed the two approached each other, retaining their altitude high above and beyond sound of the sea. Now they were floating abreast, and finally, after a moment's tensiity, they came to a stop. Their metal sides came together with an almost imperceptible jar, and they adjusted themselves for further communication.

Simultaneously their great ports slid open, and the King, who had gone to the companionway, saw the interior of the other radioplane. Bevins and Brockton in delight were shaking hands and

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congratulating each other. They talked for a moment, and then the Rear Admiral retired from view. Bevins turned to the King and said: "Your Majesty, the Emperor of Germany wishes to come aboard."

Before the King could give his assent the soldierly form of the Kaiser appeared outlined in the light of his own port, took a cautious step across the threshold, and stood before the men of England. Whatever doubts he may have had of his reception were set aside by the hands outstretched to receive him and the words of welcome which the King hastened to give him. The bulky form of the Chancellor came behind, and then, conducted by the King, they turned and entered the cabin. Brockton and Bevins brought up the rear. At one end of the table stood the American Secretary of State, and beside him were the Prime Minister of England and the Lord of the Admiralty. The Chancellor ponderously edged his way forward until he was near them, leaving the King and his imperial nephew on the opposite side of the table.

The visitors greeted and were presented to the others, and then, for the fraction of a minute, they all stood confronting and expectant until the King with his usual tact put an abrupt end to the restraint by inviting all to be seated, and asking for an explanation of the accident. The Kaiser



"The soldierly form of the Kaiser appeared."

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curbed his anxiety for news of developments, and briefly recounted his adventure, appealing now and then to Brockton for details which he did not understand. He concluded, and hesitated for an instant in embarrassed silence. Before he could formulate the opening question in a delicate subject the King had again stepped into the breach.

"The world will soon be at peace," he said meaningly, looking at his kinsman. "We have come from a meeting in America with the man who has so decreed it, and I have had the honor of joining with him in plans for the future."

"And Germany?"

"Will be glad."

"But her allotment?"

"The privilege of being one of the foremost in the movement."

"With dignity and honor?"

"Yes, and with an opportunity to play her part voluntarily."

England's King, grave and gray, and reading men from the serene heights of long life and philosophy, had expected a tempestuous outburst; but to his contentment none came. He studied the face of the ruler who had gained a world wide reputation for warlike ambitions and constant truculence, whose mailed fist had long been clenched in readiness for a blow, and was surprised. No sign of storm was apparent, but in-

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stead a calm and placid pair of eyes stared back at him.

In rapid sentences he told of the President's design, which Great Britain would accept and which she had helped outline in detail, and closed by predicting the results which would follow. He talked low and earnestly, leaning his elbows on the table before him and addressing himself only to the Emperor. His summary concluded, he straightened back into the hollow of his chair and waited for the others to speak.

The Chancellor, who had been so intent that he had never changed attitude or expression, shifted his gaze from the King to his sovereign, who for a time sat wrapped in thought. As if he had come to a quick conclusion, he looked up and in three words expressed his views. "It seems perfect," he said. The Chancellor smiled, the King looked satisfied, and the Prime Minister with a sigh of relief gave a quick sidelong glance at the American Secretary of State. The Lord of the Admiralty was rubbing his hands.

"Germany asks nothing more than fairness," the Emperor said, "and I think she will gladly accept and enter into the conclave. It will upset her more than any other nation perhaps, because she is founded on military form; but the whole world shall understand that she permits no nation, race, or people to go beyond her in enlightened

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methods." His stern expression changed to one of warmth. He smiled at some thought of his own and continued:

"We all change, I suppose, as we advance. I have learned that one may have his ideas enlarged by accident. I have known for many days what it is to be free to think, to learn profound lessons in philosophy from the forests and streams, and have come nearer to men of the American nation than I had ever hoped. I have formed new friendships, and by the camp fires at night have been given other views of life, of men and humanity, by a most admirable teacher."

He nodded his head toward Brockton, paused for a moment and then laughed aloud. "I caught a trout that weighed nearly four pounds and shot four caribou!" he chuckled.

At this incongruous termination of his speech his hearers gasped, and then waited for him to continue, which he did in humorous vein, interspersed with comments of graver trend. And in this recountal of adventure they read of his broadening. By suggestion he conveyed to them that he had gone away on a strange journey wrapped in the cares and dignities of position to be taught many lessons in democracy.

He had worked with his hands, shared the annoyances of his companions, and known the joys of independence and self support. He had discov-

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ered the trappings of courts to be shallow emblems and tawdry when contrasted with the true coats of primitive nature. He had learned that men when stripped of outward rank and position were very similar, and could demand only such respect from their fellows as they were entitled to by merit. Honest companionship which sought no other return was a priceless treasure. And now with this new view of life, stronger in health and unjaundiced in mind, he was glad to ally himself and his Empire in a movement which promised advancement without conquest and gain without aggression. The drums of war sounded very hollow, and their unmusical beatings were dying away in the distance, going to inglorious silence and disuse. It was better so!

In response to an order from Bevins, a servant with noiseless feet and deft hands brought refreshments to them. The King rose, and the others immediately stood.

"Before we part company and resume our way to our homes," he said, "I shall ask you to drink my toast." He stood erect, lifted his glass high in the air until the lights above caught the quivering opalescent liquid in their rays, and then in a voice of extreme reverence said:

"Gentlemen, to the ruler of that greatest of all kingdoms, Peace, His Excellency the President of the United States."

CHAPTER XI

PEACE IS DECLARED



THE world had become an instrument attuned to the breaking pitch, and awoke to have every string within it played upon in a day. It was a royal tune in which city after city was called upon to contribute. London, which had passed a sleepless night, was astir before dawn, aroused into a pitch of terrific excitement by the return of the Roberts, which swooped down from the air aglow with light, and courting notice.

At the iron gates in front of the palace, where the sentries were briskly tramping to and fro until called together by the descent of the radioplane, the Roberts came to the ground with every searchlight playing into the air. The alarm had been given before she came, and guards were turning out from their barracks and hurrying to the palace on the run, with arms in hand to defend Buckingham from the oncoming monster. Not until it was near the ground was it discovered that from the peaks floated three flags, the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, and the white banner of truce.

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In hasty formation the soldiers faced the place where the machine with its staring eyes would alight, and rank on rank presented a stubborn front to the visitor. Their astonishment was incalculable when they recognized as the first man to emerge from the side of this unexpected craft the missing King, followed by the Prime Minister and the head of the navy, all well, all smiling, and all taking quick cognizance of the array of defenders.

The ranking officer of the guard recovered his poise, gave the command, and the soldiers saluted, after which he stepped forward in response to the King's beckoning and received instructions for the safeguarding of the Roberts. Bevins and the Secretary of State, as they walked through the iron gates, guests of the British nation, heard the quick precise steps of men marching to form a square round their craft, and pictured to themselves the curiosity which would be aroused when the day broke.

Thus it was that within an hour after their arrival a crowd was collecting which outdid the one that assembled to view the Dreadnought on the day of her return. The strange and silent Roberts, resting in the roadway and floating the American and English flags, which had been intertwined by the fingers of a friendly breeze, was of greater interest than any other sight within memory. It

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was rumored through the throng that the King had returned; but the explanation of his absence was yet to come. For once officialdom did not hesitate, but sent to the newspapers of the city the full account of the visit to the United States, together with the reasons and results, and also the story of the fleet which had been given up for lost. It was intimated that the official overtures of the United States would be made known at a later hour of the day through due channels, and thus the air was charged with expectancy.

In the meantime Berlin too had been given its time of tumult. The return of the Emperor had been no less astounding; but he with characteristic energy had no sooner stepped within the doors of his palace than he called his secretaries and dictated a complete explanation of his own disappearance, together with a statement of what had transpired in the United States and a summary of the proposals for peace which had been formulated. The Norma waited for a brief time only, and then in full sight of an immense gathering of spectators turned her nose homeward to carry her report to Washington.

This news was cabled to London, where its dissemination gave another impetus to speculation, and before it had subsided the world's cables resumed operations.

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An operator in a transatlantic cable office, who for weeks had sat before his silent keys, saw a livid signal flash, and sprang excitedly to respond. Across the depths of the ocean came the words:

“All embargos are removed. The United States of America gives greeting, and reiterates the message which was the first to be transmitted, ‘Peace on earth. Good will to men.’”

Events were now moving with such prodigious rapidity that wherever wires of communication ran men left their occupations and waited for whatever other remarkable information might be forthcoming. For once the nations seemed in such close touch that they reached out to each other to tell their own part in the unfolding of the great mystery. The whole civilized world knew speedily that the Kaiser had been carried away by accident, that his health had been improved, and that he bore nothing but good will toward his captors. London transmitted the complete story of the taking of the British fleet, elucidated the Dreadnought's singular return, and also made known that the King and his associates had visited and been detained in Washington by their own volition.

In the United States the night had passed with most exceptional activity. The sight of the Roberts leaving New York had been heralded from coast to coast, and the administration, besieged

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for information, yielded to the popular demand and gave out the history of the war, including the account of the invention and the creation of the plant on the Florida key. The little inventor and his daughter were thrown into the limelight, and exaggerated accounts of their marvelous work were spread over pages of extras wherever newspapers were printed. The public insistently clamored for news, more news, throughout the hours, and seemed never satiated.

All eyes were turned to the President, who finally, in desperation, declined to make any further statements, and announced that details would have to come in later sequence, when time could be given to their dictation.

From the great Republic the cloak of mystery and inaction was thrown aside and the cordons to the north and the south were being dissipated as if by magic. That menacing line of blue along the Canadian border was crumpling with greater rapidity than it had been formed. Here and there through the air swept fifty radioplanes carrying improvised passenger accommodations, the sun showing them as flashing birds of blue carrying the hosts of the guard back to their armories, whence they might return to their homes and occupations of peace. In every city throughout the land astonished and exultant inhabitants watched these friendly monsters which had made the na-

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tion the most redoubtable in all the world. The guns of the border were now standing unguarded, the bivouacs obliterated, and the paths of the sentries abandoned to the effacement of nature's kindly growth.

Seattle was at last liberated, and proceeded to astonish the world with accounts of the imprisonment of the Japanese fleet which had rested in the waters of Lake Washington for so many days. Photographs of it were sent broadcast, together with interviews gained from the commanders of the hapless expedition, and by special permission Admiral Kamigawa was allowed to cable to his Government the first full report of his disaster which went through uncensored and unchecked. The fact was made patent to Japan that her men were prisoners on parole, her ships trapped in a helpless position, and their fate resting entirely on the mercy of the Government.

As if to add the proof of helplessness, Tokio learned of the detention of the British ships, and knew that any or all alliances could not be depended upon in the presence of such might as the Americans could bring to bear.

Another day dawned in Washington, bringing with it the unconditional capitulation of Japan. She appealed for peace with dignity, and left the suggestion of terms to the nation with whom none might dispute, trusting to her magnanimity.

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Congress had been called into being again, and, imbued with the spirit which had actuated the President through all his siege of stress and trial, followed his wishes. The lone man in the White House loomed as something more than mortal, and was at last being appreciated.

Japan was told that the United States demanded neither indemnities nor retention of the conquered fleet. For the benefit of the public the latter would be conveyed to New York Bay, where it would be liberated and restored to its crews. The only condition was that on its return to Pacific waters it must withdraw all men it had placed in the Philippines and Hawaii, and restore the American flag with appropriate salutes.

This then was the end of the great venture by the island across the western sea, which had staked its hope of advancement upon a ruthless descent on an unprepared and apparently impotent nation. It had spent years in anticipation, had purchased the most deadly agents of destruction whenever presented, had worked night and day in its navy yards to build giant ships of war, had covered the United States with its spies until its espionage reached everywhere, and all for this!

Now, after all its deliberate plans and quick action, it was to accept as a sole cause for jubila-

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tion the return of the men who had manned its mighty fleet, and wait for the return of ships that were useless for all purposes. Its dream of indemnities was gone, its ambition for more territory was never to be realized, and its hope of competing with other great Powers as a world factor had come to naught.

It is doubtful if the Government shared in the joy of those who had given up for dead the ones they loved and were now enabled to cast aside the scarfs of mourning. The Japanese were to learn that one successful war does not constitute a series, and that all nations were not inefficient. The lesson of civilization had been hammered home with sickening emphasis.

Scarcely had peace been concluded when the administration by a declaration to its own people cut as with one blow of a knife a knot which threatened financial panic. It was prefaced with a statement that the reason why no indemnities had been demanded from Japan was because under altered conditions following the war it would be imposing a hardship on a nation already stricken, without the need therefor. In substance it stated that inasmuch as there would be no future appropriations and consequently no taxation for navies or fortifications, vast reductions would automatically be made in the expense of operating the Government. It was also an-

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nounced that as the United States had been presented with the new form of transportation by its inventor, it had set aside for him and his heirs sufficient royalties to render them financially independent, and that furthermore in the interest of perpetual peace the secret of the radioplane would be maintained inviolable.

The railways of the country would be permitted to reorganize and continue as freight carriers until such time as their rates were deemed exorbitant or their charters expired, the Government abrogating to itself all passenger traffic within the confines of its own continent, and declaring itself a competitor for all ocean transportation under tariffs to be formulated. It ended by asserting that government ownership of aerial transportation was not adopted at the behest of any political party, but solely that the people might derive the benefit and the nation maintain its invulnerable power. Thus it was that railways were still permitted to exist and no hardship worked save in the readjustments of capitalization, which losses fell mainly upon those who had accumulated vast fortunes by the very inflation which was now punctured.

As if to knit the world together in international harmony, the culmination came in a message addressed to all nations which was penned by the hand of the President himself. It was his pro-

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positional for the maintenance of peace, and read as follows:

“That war and its barbarisms may for all time be done away with, the United States of America submits that:

“By the grace of God it has been placed in possession of such power that it could not only conquer the world, but destroy the inhabitants of other nations. This has been fully demonstrated. It has no desire to utilize its strength unjustly, but purposes to exert it for the benefit of all men.

“It considers territorial greed to be the real impelling motive in nearly all international wars. Therefore it requests that all nations become signatory to an agreement in perpetuity that under no circumstances shall there be any invasion of the territory of one country by another, and that all boundary lines shall remain as now established, except they be changed by the mutual and amicable agreement of the adjoining Powers to which they belong.

“Questions involving national dignity can be adjusted by better means than war, as can nearly all other questions which from time to time arise between Governments; hence the United States urges that full powers of adjudication and arbitration be vested in a standing commission representing each nation, which shall have for its seat

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of office some place upon which the greater number may agree.

“The United States, having faith in the Anglo-Saxon race as representing one of the most peaceful and conservative, has formed an offensive and defensive alliance with Great Britain, through the personal efforts of the King and his Prime Minister. These two Governments have no desire to act as peace officers for the world, but pledge themselves to place all their power at the command of the international commission for the enforcement of its findings.”

The German Emperor, true to his promise, was the first to give official ratification to the message, and added thereto his earnest entreaty that all Powers might speedily join. He offered an eloquent argument in its behalf, fortified by his own observations, and reviewed the reasons why Germany had previously declined disarmament in conferences at the Hague. His attitude was that of impartiality, and no mention was made of the mooted questions between Great Britain and his own country, which were later adjusted satisfactorily through the commission, and passed into history as the first dispute which that body was called upon to arbitrate.

There followed a brief lapse of days, in which the other nations of the earth studied this communication in temper according to their desires.

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It came as an amazing document in an epoch which was uprooting existing conditions and establishing new ones. The underlying threat of interference in any international war, however, made it patent that the wisest course would be in graceful acceptance. Hence it was that all principal Governments bound themselves in the compact. The last page had been written in the voluminous history of strife. The hissing of the barb, the retching of the catapult, the clangor of sword and buckler, and the booming of cannon, which in the course of time had succeeded each other, were sounds to be heard no more on land or sea. Peace had at last assumed its tranquil dominion.

When the last acceptance from the most laggardly nation was received, the news was made known to the silent man in the White House. It was on another night in summer when the moon cast its shadows over the city and the shining breast of the river. Still alone, but now beloved and understood by all his countrymen, he knelt by an open window, and, with a face glorified by the radiance of the night and his thoughts, thanked the God who had made him steadfast to accomplish his desire. The President too had reached his goal of dreams.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST CRUISE



SUMMER, dying, was bravely courtesying to its executioner Fall. Over the immense cañons of the mountainous city of New York the afternoon sun was drawing the curtains of a gala day. Triumphal arches spanned the throbbing streets, and down the fronts of the towering buildings streamed a wealth of smothering color where the flags of all nations were intermingled. Not within its existence had this city by the sea, this maw of the nation, entertained such gallant throngs.

Smart British officers drove here and there in company with friends. Gayly clad mandarins stared through narrow eyes at the somber men of Japan; fez crowned Turks smiled at gorgeously uniformed men from the Balkans; German officers, splendidly erect, traversed the streets in company with soldiers of that other eagle's race, the Russians; Colonials from Australia hobnobbed with men of New Zealand; and the folk of Italy bowed gravely to the cavaliers of old Spain, who had been watching a group from that other Re-

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public, France. Representatives of the world had assembled, under the pretext of witnessing an international marriage, to pay deference to the one invincible power. It was in reality more than that: it was the universal ratification of peace, of mutual disbandment and disarmament.

As the day lengthened the city poured its throng to the shores of the bay, where were assembled varied squadrons. The time for the departure of these was at hand, and scurrying launches conveyed aboard the men whom they had brought to this alien wedding. These eminent passengers were among the comparative few who had witnessed the ceremony and had gained more than a casual glance at the bride and groom. Those other thousands had been contented with a stare at Hillier and his wife as they rode in state through the broader thoroughfares in the morning sunlight, and for details had read the newspapers which, glorying in a plethora of news, had told them all.

Nothing had been neglected, not even the fact that this clean cut Englishman had given the best that was in him for his country, and that the calm eyed American girl was the one who had played her part in war and was the idol of her countrymen. Already they had published pictures of the King and President, who as guests had stood side by side, and portraits of the most distinguished

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men of the globe who had deferentially taken places behind them. Only one thing was hidden from the eager public, and that was the manner in which they had been reunited.

Guy, saddened and worn by failure, had been one of the first to enter the United States when the barrier against the world was thrown down, and Norma, still yearning for his love, had gone to his arms as if nothing had ever held them apart. She was a world figure now, and the world was at her feet. Behind him was nothing save the knowledge of earnest endeavor and honest defeat; but to her he had been the same, nor did she anticipate that a King would later take his hand and say, "Well done, even though you failed."

They had passed the brief days prior to the ceremony in dread, courting neither the display nor the limelight into which they were driven by the parts they had played. The publicity had been against their wishes, and the gifts of the world in which each country vied afforded no pleasure equal to that of being alone and at rest with each other. They had seized the first opportunity after the marriage to escape, leaving their destination unknown.

They had retreated to the seclusion of Atlantic Highlands, where the great beacon stands facing the broad stretch of open sea, and where they might be removed from the pomp and pageantry

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of nations. And even as that great embarkation took place along the water front of the city which loomed far behind them, they stood on a cliff by the ocean side. They had avoided the last act in the drama of deference, a reception given to the President and the inventor, and were content to be left alone.

Suddenly from the far away bay came the slow, sullen undertone of guns in salute. Again came the thunderous monotone, and then, emerging from the distant haze into the clearer air, appeared a flight of aërial things in orderly formation. The girl's hands clasped themselves together as she watched.

There they were, twenty miles away, the ships—her ships—which she had led out to victory and directed through the maze and turmoil of battle. She stood silent and spellbound as they slowly advanced, and then discerned on the waters beneath them the slow moving shapes of ships of the sea. The radioplanes were traversing the air as an escort above those others in final parade. In twin procession the fleets came nearer, embodiments of might.

The guns of Governor's Island belched as they advanced; then from opposite sides of the channel the voices of Forts Lafayette and Hamilton gave greeting and farewell. Onward they swept to where the colossal Statue of Liberty held her

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beacon aloft in token of a new enlightenment of the world, and the cannon of the sea fleet spoke for the first time in unison, saluting as they passed in one terrible explosion of sound which reverberated along the shores and was thrown back by the echoes. Here they came, the dying gladiators of all nations, sailing out to doom!

Well in front were the vanquished squadrons of Japan, their funnels repaired for the last cruise they would ever make, but stripped of fighting masts. Back of them came the mighty ships of England, with prows turned outward for their final voyage. German cruisers, graceful and well manned, followed; while in their wakes could be seen others flying the banners of Italy, of France, of Russia, and nearly every maritime nation of the globe. Flanking this assemblage were the vessels of the American navy, which but a short time before had been regarded as the country's bulwarks, and were now participating in the last review.

The science of ages, the experience of all who had gone down to the sea, the refinement of skill and study, and the genius of evolution were embodied in those metal sides. They represented the wealth of nations collected through sweat and blood, all poured out unstintedly for this,—consignment to the scrap heaps of a world that had abandoned war. The glories of past deeds of

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valor would no longer be emulated upon the waves. The sea had been untenanted before man's ingenuity found a means of breasting it. His coming had left it unscarred and unimproved. It alone was unconquerable, changeless, and heedless. Through centuries it had scorned him, and now it was bidding his craft farewell and carrying his fleets for the last time. No more would its wastes echo to his passing salute or witness his trivial strainings for a flag. Only the song of the fisherman might henceforth echo along the shores whereon it beat. It had outlasted those sturdy hulls of oak and steel that once had dared its force.

High above swept the invaders of that new territory to which man had at last laid claim and was to hold in domination for his use. Blue as the skies above them, the radioplanes hovered over and bade farewell to the vanishing fleets. In the vanguard flew the Norma, her colors fluttering in the breeze of flight as they had done on that day when she swooped down through screaming shells to wrest power from the enemy. Floating after her moved the huge Roberts, its metal sides throwing back the rays of the western sun. Close behind in stately pursuit was Seventeen, whose plates had felt the biting force of the dead Yaku-mo's guns. And so they came, bidding farewell to the ships of an abandoned sea. Small wonder

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that the soul of the girl who watched felt one instant's regret that she was never again to know the exhilaration of the fray! A half smile of tenderness parted her lips as she thought that there in the air above her were her friends and companions in arms,—grim old fighting Bevins with his prayerful oaths, good natured Brockton whose kindness she knew, and studious little Jenkins whose imperturbability equaled his steadfast bravery.

Guy, understanding and respecting the storm of feeling which must be hers at sight of this pageantry of which she had been such a vital part, watched her in silence. Almost at their feet squatted Fort Hancock, whose guns were to bel- low for the last time. It too, like its fellow forts, was of the dying. Like them its bastions would be abandoned and the men within driven to ways of peace. Fortress and ship, garrison and crew, would be no more. Crumbling, untenanted walls left as records of a nation's defense, and rotting uniforms relegated to garrets, would be all that were left,—armies reorganized and reduced for police force only, and sailors become fishermen or passing their lives in other occupations and reminiscensing of the sea; swords rusting in scabbards and guns corroding in embrasures, nothing more!

The last salute had boomed out. Lower and lower flew the radioplanes, till they were close

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above the outgoing ships. The ports of the peace-makers opened, and from them fell garlands of flowers, which fluttered down through the air indiscriminately upon the doomed craft and the waves themselves,—a tribute of peace from the living and wreaths for the dying gladiators of war.

Hand in hand Norma and Guy stood upon the headland beneath the gray beacon lights that would welcome strange travelers from foreign ports no more. Into the darkening skies of the east the fleets of the nations were speeding to dissolution and death. The long, steady swell of the free and unburdened sea came monotonously hammering at their feet. In silence they watched the relics of cruel war sail out, saw their hulls disappear, saw the trails of smoke diverge as each squadron sought its own course, and then looked into each other's eyes, reading therein nothing but a promise of love and serenity. Their troubles had vanished as had those fleets of the sea, and life with all its possibilities of accomplishment and contentment was before them. They turned from the great silent ocean and walked into the golden radiance of the sunset toward their home.

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